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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Santa Barbara

The Ethics of Buddhist History: A Study of the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Religious Studies

by

Stephen C. Berkwitz

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June 1999

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ABSTRACT

The Ethics of Buddhist History: A Study of the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s

by

Stephen C. Berkwitz

While literature is often thought to be a product of culture, the writing of history in medieval Sri Lanka was predicated upon the belief that texts themselves are productive of culture and capable of making people virtuous. This dissertation examines the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s, two distinct histories with the same basic narrative written around the thirteenth century C.E., to show how they were conceived and designed to effect an ethical transformation in their readers and listeners. In short, these texts employ language in ways that make an audience feel implicated in the narrative, evoking emotional responses that, in turn, condition moral awareness and agency.

Although the *Thūpavaṃsa*s reflect somewhat different styles of composition and literary expression, both texts work to situate their readers and listeners in a relationship of dependence and intimacy with the Buddha. In recalling what the Buddha and other virtuous agents did in the past, the *Thūpavaṃsa*s present history as a record of events undertaken for the benefit of later generations. An audience is thus led to develop a moral subjectivity marked by feelings of serene joy and gratitude for the fact that their needs were anticipated and their welfare already accomplished. This study argues that the *Thūpavaṃsa*s are "Buddhist" histories because they presume to be able to generate emotions and effects that Buddhists in medieval Sri Lanka valued as conducive to attaining conditions of worldly and world-transcending happiness.

Scholars who have taken the "problem" of Buddhist history to be one of demythologizing its imaginative excesses or demystifying its ideological sleights of hand have effectively overlooked how its narratives work to give rise to habits of thought and emotional dispositions that entail obligations to venerate the Buddha. By examining how the *Thūpavaṃsa*s were produced and composed as literary works that affect how an audience thinks, feels, and acts in the world, we will see how two Buddhist histories were envisioned to transform readers and listeners into virtuous persons who recall the past and act in accordance with their ascribed status as the beneficiaries of history.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION: READING THE *VAṂSAKATHĀ*

When it comes to reading Buddhist philosophical and commentarial texts, scholars have readily acknowledged the challenges of highly technical vocabularies and intellectually profound ideas. In recognizing these and other obstacles to understanding, Buddhist Studies scholars have expended considerable energy in developing thoughtful and sophisticated approaches toward reading works that contribute to a Buddhist history of ideas. Yet, in contrast, the level of sustained thought given to the reading of texts from other genres of Buddhist literature has been comparatively low. Buddhist historical narratives, for example, have been frequently translated and studied without much attention paid to the literary forms and functions of such texts. We tend to treat Buddhist chronicles like other histories, evaluating the accuracy of their narratives while questioning the motives behind acts of representation. This is particularly the case in Sri Lanka where, in the course of over two millennia of Buddhist literary activity, the writing of history in the form of the "chronicle" (*vaṃsa*) has generated numerous extant texts and various interpretations of their significance as historical narratives. I will maintain, however, that our reluctance to consider differences in premodern conceptions of history held by Buddhist authors and scribes writing centuries ago leads us to continually cast Sri Lanka's *vaṃsa*s as texts that speak exclusively to modern scholarly and political concerns. By examining how the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s appear to have been written and read through hints found in the texts

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themselves, I will propose a reading of Buddhist history that stresses its manifest concerns with ethics and the transformation of an audience.[1]

Among the many possible readings of Buddhist histories written in Sri Lanka, I favor one that recognizes and stresses their literary elements, which I believe contributed to the periodic production and dissemination of such texts since the beginning of the common era. What seems to have escaped many modern interpreters of the *vaṃsa*s, or as they are referred to in Sri Lanka—"*vaṃsakathā*," is that they are highly crafted works that evince profound concerns for the well-being of their audiences. While literature is routinely thought to be the product of a vaguely defined notion of "culture," the writing of history in medieval Sri Lanka appears to have been predicated upon the assumption that texts themselves are productive of culture and capable of making people virtuous. The central argument of my thesis is that Buddhist history-writing as depicted in the *Thūpavaṃsa*, or "The Chronicle of the Relic Shrine," was primarily concerned with generating emotions and a moral subjectivity that would lead its readers and listeners to engage in devotional acts that carried real ethical and soteriological effects. The *Thūpavaṃsa*, as represented in its two extant versions written in the languages of Pāli and Sinhala respectively, is significant since it affords a glimpse of how medieval Buddhists envisioned historical narratives to effect an ethical transformation in

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[1] For the sake of simplicity, I will use the general term "Buddhist history" to refer specifically to narratives written in Sri Lanka concerning figures and events from the past. I do not claim that my argument applies equally well to practices of history-writing in Buddhist communities in other lands, although I hope that my study may prove useful to others researching premodern conceptions of history in other cultural contexts.

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an audience. As such, this text helps us to expand and nuance our perspective on history-writing as a religious practice.[2]

In what follows, I will show that the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s, written around the twelfth and thirteenth centuries C.E. respectively, use rhetorical and aesthetic strategies to generate emotions that implicate the reader and/or listener in a relationship of intimacy and dependence on the Buddha. My focus upon two versions of a single text is necessary to demonstrate how language is employed by the authors to persuade and attract their audiences towards particular ways of thinking and feeling. Indeed, it would be misleading to assume (as many modern scholars have) that Sri Lanka's Buddhist histories simply propound an ideology that manipulated and convinced Sri Lankans to accept a particular socio-political vision of reality as normative.[3] Such a conclusion ignores the fact that in South Asia a text was often conceived as an aesthetic form that could alter a person's existential condition and even the ontological conditions of the world.[4] Accordingly, the *Thūpavaṃsa*s display

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[2] In chapter two below I describe how writing history in Sinhala or Pāli represented a choice that affected the extent to which a text could generate emotions in a reader or listener owing to the respective linguistic capacities of both languages. It is enough here to alert the reader that while the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s shared a general intention to inspire and transform an audience, the Sinhala version was more elaborately composed with this goal in mind.

[3] For examples of studies that interpret Buddhist *vaṃsa*s or "chronicles" as texts directed at legitimating socio-political orders and promoting ethnic-nationalism, see Heinz Bechert, "The Beginnings of Buddhist Historiography: *Mahāvaṃsa* and Political Thinking," in Bardwell L. Smith, ed., *Religion and Legitimation of Power in Sri Lanka* (Chambersburg: Anima Books, 1978): 1-12; Trevor Ling, "Kingship and Nationalism in Pali Buddhism," in P. Denwood and A. Piatigorsky, *Buddhist Studies: Ancient and Modern* (London and Dublin: Curzon Press, 1983): 60-73; Stanley Tambiah, *Buddhism Betrayed?: Religion, Politics, and Violence in Sri Lanka* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992); Tessa Bartholomeusz and Chandra R. de Silva, "Buddhist Fundamentalism and Identity in Sri Lanka," in *Buddhist Fundamentalism and Minority Identities in Sri Lanka*, ed. Tessa Bartholomeusz and Chandra R. de Silva (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998): 1-35.

[4] The agency of texts in South Asia may be fruitfully explored by examinations into the highly developed field of Sanskrit poetics and also the theories surrounding the power of spoken words in the form of *mantra*s, or sacred formulae that are recited during ritual

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how the careful use of rhetoric and aesthetics in a text are designed to create good readers and listeners, and thus make some readings more appealing and likely than others.

The main point underlying Buddhist history-writing in medieval Sri Lanka appears to have been that what was done in the past was undertaken for the sake of later generations. Put differently, the *Thūpavaṃsa*s and other chronicles written between the tenth and fourteenth centuries C.E. manifest a concern to make their audiences understand that they are the direct beneficiaries of a history, wherein virtuous beings in the past acted on the behalf of those in the present. Thus, for a medieval Sri Lankan audience, Buddhist history begins with the benevolence shown by Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, and sustains this theme of beneficence throughout. The narratives of the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s both begin "four incalculable world-periods and one hundred-thousand eons ago" when a sage named Sumedha renounced immense wealth and made a vow at the foot of Dīpaṅkara Buddha to attain Buddhahood for the sake of all beings.[5] At this point, in a manner reminiscent of the Pāli *Thūpavaṃsa*, the Sinhala version the overarching theme of beneficence in history with a brief soliloquy by Sumedha:

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performances. I make reference to a number of useful and accessible introductions to Sanskrit aesthetic theory in chapter four of this study. On the subject of *mantras*, see Harvey P. Alper, ed., *Understanding Mantras* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), as well as sections on the power of speech conceived to exist in the recitation of the Veda in Barbara A. Holdrege, *Veda and Torah: Transcending the Textuality of Scripture* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996).

[5] *Thūp* 148-150; *SThūp* 1-2. The vast scale of time in Buddhist histories is hinted at early on in the Pāli *Cakkavattisīhanāda Sutta*, in *Dīgha Nikāya*, 26. Hindu and Jain cosmologies also share an inestimatable time-frame, although as Jan Nattier notes, the Hindu chronology differs from Buddhist and Jaina chronolgies in that the former typically presents the passing of time as a long period of steady decline before the destruction of the world, whereas the latter systems typically represent time as oscillating between phases of improvement and degeneration. See her *Once Upon a Future Time: Studies in a Buddhist Prophecy of Decline* (Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press, 1991), p. 17.

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> And thinking, 'When a resolute one like me, who is able to follow the Buddha as an *arahant* who has attained the Fourfold Discriminating Knowledge, enters the city of Nirvana leaving the mass of sentient beings who experience the sorrow of *saṃsāra*, who else will help the forlorn world? I will become a Buddha like this Buddha and deliver twenty-four incalculables of beings,' he lied down like a seed which is planted in the mud to yield the immortal fruit, namely the knowledge of omniscience, on the Wish-fulfilling Tree, namely the state of Enlightenment.[6]

The text subsequently proceeds to recall the various vows made by the aspirant to Buddhahood, or the "Bodhisattva," in the presence of the subsequent twenty-three former Buddhas. As such, Buddhist history as exemplified in the *Thūpavaṃsa*s is set in a context marked by an almost immeasurable passage of time, during which the Bodhisattva underwent incredible struggles and sacrifices to become the Buddha Gotama for the well-being of those living in the present age.

I.1 BUDDHIST HISTORY IN THE MODERN WORLD

To conceive of history as narratives that testify to the provisions made in the past for the welfare of beings in the future differs considerably from the

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[6] *SThūp* 5: *'Sivupiḷisimbiyā* [P: *catupaṭisambhidā*] *pat rahatva budun passehi yanṭa pohosatva mā sē vū vīryyavat ekakhu sasara duk viṇḍinā satva samūhayā hāra nivan purayaṭa van kalhi asaraṇīya lovaṭa anik kavarek pihiṭa vē da, mē budurajāṇan vahansē men sūvisi asaṅkhyayak satvayan galvā budu vemi' yi bodhi sambhāra namāti kalpa vṛkṣaya sarvajñatājñānaya namāti amāphala ganvanṭa kalalhi rōpaṇaya kaḷa bijuvaṭak men vādahot sēka.* Cf. the episode in the Pāli *Thūpavaṃsa* where Sumedha explains the motive for putting off his own personal attainment of Nirvana in the following manner: "And while he lied down, thinking 'If I wished, burning away all the defilements and becoming a novice in the Sangha, I could enter the city of Ramma [with the Buddha]. But destroying my defilements for the sake of attaining Nirvana is not to be done with an unknown form. Rather, having attained the highest awakening like Dīpaṅkara, the Ten-Powered One, making the people board the Dhamma-ship and causing them to cross the ocean of Samsara, let me attain Complete Nirvana afterwards." See *Thūp* 150: *Nipanno ca: sace ahaṃ iccheyyaṃ sabbakilese jhāpetvā saṅghanavako hutvā rammanagaraṃ paviseyyaṃ; aññātakavesena pana me kileses jhāpetvā nibbānappattiyā kiccaṃ natthi, yannūnāhaṃ dīpaṅkaradasabalo viya paramābhisambodhiṃ patvā dhammanāvaṃ āropetvā mahājanaṃ saṃsārasāgarā uttāretvā pacchā parinibbāyeyyaṃ, idaṃ me patirūpan ti cintetvā.*

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typically modernist perspectives of nineteenth and twentieth-century historiography, which take the past to be a finite span of time that is ascertained and explained retrospectively in the sober, objective examination of sources. That is to say, many modern readers view Buddhist history as a sequential period of time beginning with the founding of the religion in India around the sixth century B.C.E and proceeding up to the present day. Not surprisingly, there is little room among modernist historians for providential readings of history, wherein the present unfolds from the past largely by design.[7] Yet in reading the medieval chronicles of Sri Lanka, one repeatedly encounters the notion that agency in Buddhist histories is attributed for the most part to the Buddha himself, while those who have followed him are "patients," or the recipients of his acts.[8] Other actors in history thus reveal their dependence upon the Buddha by performing actions that were foretold by him or made possible by what he has done. Put differently, knowing that the Buddha taught a method to gain liberation and provided his relics for worship in order to gain wordly and world-transcending benefits also implies that one's potential for moral and spiritual advancement was made possible by someone else. The

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[7] Although scholars of Buddhism might conclude that this vision of history represents a worldview that is determined by the theory of karma, I am reluctant to state that this can somehow be construed as a "karmic" type of history. While notions of karma are indeed present throughout the *Thūpavaṃsa*s and other medieval Sri Lankan chronicles, there is little evidence that the authors credit karma as the sole or even primary factor for understanding the significance of history. Rather, the emphasis in the *Thūpavaṃsa*s and several other medieval *vaṃsa*s is clearly and continually given to the present as a state of existence where the many have benefitted by the actions of another—i.e., the Buddha and his many embodiments as the Bodhisattva. For a more traditional interpretation of history in Buddhism, wherein karma is seen as determinative, see Christopher Lamb, "Buddhism," in Jean Holm with John Bowker, *Myth and History* (London, New York: Pinter Publishers, 1994): 8-39.

[8] I am borrowing the term "patient" from Ronald Inden, who argues that people do not act only as individual agents in isolation from others, but rather as persons they sometimes act as the instruments or patients of others in ways that are both complicit and/or resistant. See Inden, *Imagining India* (London and New York: Blackwell, 1990), 22-27.

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Buddha's quality of omniscience is accordingly emphasized in epithets for the Buddha and evoked in descriptions of his knowledge and past deeds.[9] A Buddha who is omniscient (as all Buddhas are said to be) is able to foresee the future existence of all beings and to provide for their welfare. In this way, we might conclude that the Buddha's omniscience testifies as much to his caring for all beings as it does to the extent of his wisdom.

As we will see below, the narratives of medieval Buddhist histories such as the *Thūpavaṃsa* invoke a stance towards the past that differs radically from the positions of the vast majority of nineteenth and twentieth-century scholars who have written on the *vaṃsakathā*. The anthropologist E. Valentine Daniel has recently hypothesized that European colonialism transformed historical consciousness in South Asia, impressing a method of history upon Sri Lankans and others in the region that privileges writing from a position that, in effect, transcends the world in order to describe it objectively and analytically. Daniel helpfully contrasts the orientations of premodern and postcolonial readings of the *vaṃsa*s in terms of "ways of being in the world" versus "ways of seeing the world."[10] In this sense, we might understand premodern Buddhist history-writing as a practice equally concerned with providing a means of living well in the world as it is with providing information about it. Yet, following Daniel, modern orientations towards history tend to disregard ontological concerns almost exclusively in favor of epistemological

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[9] For example, see *Thūp* 27, 167, where the Buddha-to-be is said to have attained the knowledge of the births and passing away of all beings (P: *cutūpapātañāṇaṃ patvā*) during the middle watch of the night before penetrating the knowledge of omniscience (P: *sabbaññutañāṇaṃ paṭivijjhitvā*) upon gaining full Buddhahood.

[10] E. Valentine Daniel, *Charred Lullabies: Chapters in an Anthropography of Violence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), pp. 43-45.

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justifications for "seeing" the world so that one might gain knowledge and power over it.[11]

In other words, modernist historians tend to read the *vaṃsakathā* as documents that reveal what happened in the past, allowing the person with a critical eye to selectively filter out myths and legends from the texts to reconstruct the past as it actually occurred. Reading the chronicles has thus enabled modern scholars from Asia, Europe, and America to write a singularly conceived "history" of Buddhism along the lines of what they believe to be true about the world. For example, a book published on May 24, 1956 and entitled *2500 Years of Buddhism* is instructive for our study because it represents an attempt by some Indian and Japanese scholars—as well as the Government of India—to both date and celebrate the age of Buddhism in the world.[12] Its publication was meant to coincide with the two thousand-five hundredth anniversary of the *mahāparinirvāṇa* of the Buddha, an event that was celebrated by many Buddhists and governments throughout Asia. For our purposes, however, the very title of the book is illuminating since it represents a fundamental tenet in the modern historiography of Buddhism, namely that

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[11] The relation between gaining knowledge and gaining power in South Asia has been examined by an increasing number of scholars. Among the more influential contributions to this end, Bernard S. Cohn has argued persuasively that "the conquest of India was a conquest of knowledge", and that a knowledge of history provided the British with a means to rule a colonial state. In short, by determining the history of India, British colonialists were able to establish a system to codify and control its inhabitants based upon systems of previous regimes that would assist them in governing the nation-state of India. See Cohn, *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 5, 16. Similarly, Inden has maintained that Orientalist knowledge about caste and Hinduism in India resulted in the intellectual and political domination of the "East," whereby the thoughts of Orientals were represented and explained by scholars while their governments gained the power to establish trading outposts and colonial rule in Oriental lands. See his *Imagining India*, p. 38.

[12] See P.V. Bhapat, ed., *2500 Years of Buddhism* (Delhi: Government of India, Publications Division, 1956). This text is a particularly rich source of study for examining modern cultural and scholarly ssumptions about what the Buddha and Buddhism represent.

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Buddhist history begins with the life-story of Gotama Buddha and continues, all its vicissitudes notwithstanding, up to the present day.

Buddhist history-writing in premodern Sri Lanka, however, appears to have been a decidedly different enterprise from that which is found in the modern, postcolonial world. For instance, one does not date the origins of Buddhism in the sixth-century B.C.E., nor does one find chapters on the history of Buddhism in China and Japan.[13] Modern histories of Buddhism provide the reader with a means of "seeing" the world, learning when and where it was that Buddhism began and spread. For the medieval authors of the *vaṃsa* texts it is only the Dispensation of Gotama Buddha (that is, his "Sāsana," or the existence of the teachings and institutions ascribed to him) that began in India around the sixth century B.C.E., since their narratives begin much earlier with the start of his *bodhisattva* career. Modern historians of Buddhism have tended to emphasize the fact that it is a world religion that has existed for two and one-half millennia. In contrast, the *vaṃsas* in premodern Sri Lanka relate that the Dispensation of the Buddha has roots that go back much further in time and constitutes a precious gift obtained and sustained with much difficulty.[14] The difference is perhaps a subtle one, but the issue is not how long "Buddhism"

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[13] See, for example, chapters I, II, and VI-B in Bhapat, ed. *2500 Years of Buddhism*. A similar historical vision, commonly encountered in modern histories of Buddhism, can also be found in a textbook by Richard H. Robinson and Willard L. Johnson, *The Buddhist Religion: A Historical Introduction*, 4th edit., (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1997).

[14] It should be noted that Buddhists have traditionally held that their religion, like everything else in the world, is impermanent and must someday come to an end. The medieval *vaṃsakathā*, for instance, routinely describe the Sāsana as lasting five thousand years.

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has existed, but rather how it is that the Dispensation of the Buddha has existed this long.

For the most part, modernist readings of Sri Lankan Buddhist histories make little effort towards interpreting these texts on their own terms as singular "literary acts" that wholly constitute various expressions and images directed at producing effects in an audience.[15] Instead, the Buddhist chronicles of Sri Lanka are routinely interpreted and evaluated according to some set of criteria and interests that are often if not always far removed from the workings and intents displayed in the texts themselves. Rather than examining how a Buddhist chronicle like the *Thūpavaṃsa* was produced as a complete work, modern readers will usually read a given text selectively for information that reflects such modern concerns as reconstructing what "really happened" in the past, exposing a primordial source for Sinhala Buddhist nationalism, and evaluating the literary merits of a given text within the broader context of a national literature.[16] Given the frequency and influence of such modernist readings of Sri Lankan histories, it would be useful to identify a fairly coherent range of interpretations that until now have influenced the way that we view the *vaṃsa*s of Theravāda Buddhism. The various readings of Buddhist history will

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[15] I am borrowing the term "literary act" from Dwight Reynolds who, in a paper entitled "The Many Voices of Arabic Autobiography" delivered at Harvard University on 11 March 1998, introduced me to this specific idea of viewing a text as an independent work, free from the artifical constraints of a genre, to allow for the fact that a given text can be read with various strategies in mind. To my mind, this idea resonates nicely with a statement by Dominick LaCapra, who says, "Whatever else they may be, texts are events in the history of language." See LaCapra, *Rethinking Intellectual History: Texts Contexts Language* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), p. 65.

[16] I am grateful to Prof. W. S. Karunatillake, Prof. P. B. Meegaskumbura, and Prof. G. D. Wijayawardhana for conversations that have helped me to think about Sri Lanka's *vaṃsa* literature in ways that go beyond a rigid dichotomy of historical realism on the one hand and fictional narrative on the other.

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not be taken up in any great detail here, but instead will be merely identified and used to outline other methods of interpreting Buddhist history that inhibit a literary reading of the *Thūpavaṃsa*s and their evident concerns with ways of "being in the world."

Perhaps the most common approach toward reading Sri Lankan Buddhist history is governed by the characteristically modernist desire to use human reason to discover truth.[17] From this perspective one cannot rely upon the internal characteristics of the *vaṃsa*s for an interpretation of their historical value, since they are presumed to contain obviously false and fantastic material. To read a historical text in this manner entails embarking upon a program of "demythologizing" Buddhist history in order to uncover the truth that is hidden within. Writing in the 1960s on the "problems" of Sri Lanka's historical sources, the Sinhala historian G. C. Mendis clearly outlines an approach towards the *vaṃsa*s that is generously informed by European traditions of historiography and rationalism:

> History as a science came to be based on authentic facts. It ceased to include myths and legends or to trace events to supernatural, unnatural or imaginary causes. It dealt with truth in the concrete, with conditions that actually existed, with events that actually took place, and with natural causes that actually led to them. In short it dealt with the past as it really was.[18]

According to Mendis, the historical material provided by the *Mahāvaṃsa* relates "many legends and stories of little historical value," and as such it must

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[17] My use of the term "modernist" here is influenced by David Harvey, who characterizes modernity as a powerful intellectual agenda stemming from eighteenth-century Enlightenment thought and emphasizing a universalizable standard of knowledge based upon rationality and a break from the past. See Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), pp. 12-13.

[18] G. C. Mendis, *Problems of Ceylon History* (Colombo: The Colombo Apothecaries Co., n.d.), p. 12.

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be read critically in order to distinguish the reality of the past from the beliefs contemporary to its recording.[19] Therefore, while he admits that the chronicle literature of Sri Lanka contain a great deal of valuable historical information, he consistently warns the modern reader that these texts are also full of mythological material that should be left out of serious historical accounts.[20]

Of course the historical criticism that Mendis employed in the mid-twentieth century could hardly have been considered a novel approach for examining the Buddhist chronicles of Sri Lanka. Around one hundred years earlier, the British civil servant George Turnour wrote that "Ceylon" had indigenous historical sources that culminated in "an uninterrupted historical record of nearly *twenty four centuries*."[21] Turnour's ability to read Sinhala and Pāli enabled him not only to render the first complete translation of the *Mahāvaṃsa* into English, but also led him to write other scholarly pieces familiarizing Oriental scholars in the West with some of Sri Lanka's Buddhist chronicles. His stated goal in publishing an edition and translation of the *Mahāvaṃsa* in 1837 was "to invite the attention of oriental scholars to the historical data contained in the ancient Pāli buddhistical records, as exhibited in

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19 Mendis, *Problems of Ceylon History*, pp. 74-76.

20 Mendis reserved criticism for other historians such as L. S. Perera and C. W. Nicholas who, he claimed, were willing to to include the legendary Vijaya myth in their histories with the supposition that there may be a "residue of history" in such accounts, when in fact there is no evidence that any section of the island's early immigrants were named "Sīhala" or that the demonic *yakkhas* refered to the island's aboriginal inhabitants. See, for example, Mendis, *Problems of Ceylon History*, pp. 61-62. Briefly, the story of Vijaya relates how the grandson of the union between a lion and a princess was exiled from India and arrived in Sri Lanka with 500 comrades on the very day that the Buddha passed away. The myth describes Vijaya as having slayed the demonic *yakkhas* before becoming the first king of Sri Lanka. While this story maintains various degrees of popular acceptance among Sinhalas, there is yet no external evidence to support its historicity.

21 George Turnour, *The Mahāwanso* (Ceylon: Cotta Church Mission Press, 1837), p. I (Turnour's emphasis).

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the Mahāwanso," and there is some evidence to conclude that he also drew more attention to the text among Sri Lankan monks themselves.[22]

Turnour became one of the earliest advocates for consulting the Buddhist *vaṃsakathā* in an effort to reconstruct an accurate historical picture of South Asia more generally. The *Mahāvaṃsa* was deemed by Turnour to contain a valuable chronology of dates associated with the three recitals of the Pāli Canon and the reigns of ancient Indian kings. Moreover, he points out that much of the sites referred to in the text can be readily observed first-hand, a fact that was taken to lend more credibility to its accounts. Turnour's positive evaluation of the historicity of the *Mahāvaṃsa* was drawn in stark contrast to most other Indian sources:

> I should say, . . . there does not now exist an authentic, connected, and chronologically correct hindu history; and that the absence of that history proceeds, not from original deficiency of historical data, nor their destruction by the ravages of war, but the systematic perversion of those data, adopted to work out the monstrous scheme upon which the hindu faith is based.[23]

The zeal with which Turnour promoted the Buddhist chronicles of Sri Lanka as textual resources for the Orientalist historian contributed greatly to a particular modernist perspective through which the *vaṃsa*s could be read. Furthermore

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[22] Turnour, pp. ii, xi. John Rogers advises us to take cautiously Turnour's claim that an awareness of the *Mahāvaṃsa* among Sri Lankan monks was quite limited. He points out that in the mid-eighteenth century a Kandyan king commisssioned that the *Mahāvaṃsa* be extended and brought up to date, and also that earlier reports from Anthony Bertolacci and John Davy in the island give signs that much of the material from this chronicle circulated orally. See Rogers, "Historical Images in the British Period," in *Sri Lanka: History and the Roots of Conflict*, ed. Jonathan Spencer (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 89. Still, it is significant that the *Mahāvaṃsa* was first translated into Sinhala in 1874 by the Ven. Hikkaduwe Sri Sumangala and Pandit Batuvantudave Sri Devarakṣita at the request of a British colonial administrator. We might then attribute a renewed interest in this text among Sri Lankans to the scholarly interest evident in some nineteenth-century Europeans. On the British interest in the *Mahāvaṃsa*, see Steven Kemper, *The Presence of the Past: Chronicles, Politics, and Culture in Sinhala Life* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), p. 95.

[23] Turnour, p. xix.

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his explicit characterization of the chronicle as a "historical" rather than a "religious" work set the stage for succeeding generations to view the *vaṃsa*s primarily as repositories of historical facts mixed in with some legendary excesses.[24]

Turnour's influence on modernist readings of Sri Lanka's Buddhist histories, however, became overshadowed by later scholars. Hermann Oldenberg published an edition and translation of the *Dīpavaṃsa* in 1879, and suggested that the *Dīpavaṃsa* and *Mahāvaṃsa* were based on historical accounts from the legendary commentarial texts (P: *aṭṭhakathā*) written down in Sinhala.[25] Subsequently, in the early twentieth century, the talented German scholar Wilhelm Geiger contributed voluminous research and linguistic work into the area of Sri Lankan language and literature. Geiger's critical editions and subsequent translations of the *Mahāvaṃsa* and its later extensions, which he called the '*Cūḷavaṃsa*,' have earned him a justifiably preeminent position in the scholarly study of the Pāli *vaṃsa*s of Sri Lanka. Yet in spite of Geiger's advances in the study of the *vaṃsa* literature, he did not depart from earlier historicist readings that relied upon one's use of reason and understanding of the natural world to evaluate the truth of a narrative. For Geiger, like Turnour and Mendis, it was necessary to carefully scrutinize the "trustworthiness" of the Buddhist chronicles. Therefore much of his research centered on distinguishing historical fact from fiction:

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[24] Turnour, p. ii.

[25] Hermann Oldenberg, *The Dīpavaṃsa: An Ancient Buddhist Historical Record* (1879; reprint, New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1992), p. 3.

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> There is a good number of fables, legends and tales of marvels in the Mahāvaṃsa, and we must in each particular case attempt to find out whether there is in the narrative an historical kernel or not. It is, for instance, evident that the story of the three visits of the Buddha to Laṅkā in ch. 1 is purely legendary, invented at a later time in the island itself in order to legitimate its sanctity. But we stand on firmer ground in regard to the report of the three Buddhist Councils (chs. 3-5). It is not necessary to assume that the report is correct in all its details. But the fact itself can hardly be called into question.[26]

Implicit in Geiger's view is that the Buddhist chronicles are historical works that can be used as documents to reconstruct the island's history, provided that the scholar employs a discerning eye to strip away the mythical additions. He presumes that the true events are naturally "simple" and presented in a sober fashion, and further that mythical and marvelous flourishes are added over time.[27] After considering internal and external evidence, Geiger confirms that the *Mahāvaṃsa* is a trustworthy source despite its "poetical licenses," and advises us to begin our investigation into the *vaṃsa* material by removing any "mythical additions."[28]

Thus, as we reconsider the approach outlined by Mendis above, it is apparent that the evaluations of the Sri Lankan *vaṃsa* literature by western historians in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have had a considerable effect upon the way Sri Lankans themselves read their history. The largely positive judgments for the historical value of the *vaṃsa*s by Western scholars

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26 Wilhelm Geiger, "The Trustworthiness of the Mahāvaṃsa," *The Indian Historical Quarterly* VI, no. 2 (June 1930), p. 208.

27 Wilhelm Geiger, *The Mahāvaṃsa: Or the Great Chronicle of Ceylon* (1912; reprint, New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1993), pp. xiv-xv. For example, Geiger casts doubt over the years of the reigns of the early kings between Devānampiya Tissa and Duṭṭhagāmaṇī because the text gives them all in whole numbers of forty or ten-year reigns (p. xxii). Presumably this is too much of a coincidence to be true.

28 Geiger, "The Trustworthiness of the Mahāvaṃsa," p. 228. Cf. Geiger, *The Mahāvaṃsa*, p. xv.

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has encouraged many Sri Lankan historians to view these texts in a similar light.[29] Here we may identify a second category of modernist interpretation that grew out of the intellectual project to demythologize the chronicles in order to reconstruct the history of the island. This might be broadly described as a nationalistic reading, wherein the past as depicted in histories such as the *Mahāvaṃsa* is held up as a charter for the present. John Rogers has argued convincingly that western historical images and ideas derived in large part from the narratives of Buddhist *vaṃsa*s played a critical role in the development of the modern historical consciousness of Sinhalas in Sri Lanka. The work of European scholars outlined an ancient civilization found in the chronicles and at archeological sites in terms of a national heritage marked by and coherent with sharply defined racial, religious, and linguistic identities.[30] Significantly a number of Sri Lankan nationalist leaders drew upon these historical images and extended them to validate the contemporary Sinhala community for its great civilization. A result of this was that in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Sinhalas began to reject the position of the British colonialists that their culture had declined from its once impressive past and was, in effect, a

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[29] In addition to the works of Mendis, we may briefly note a few other comments from Sri Lankan scholars acknowledging the value of the *Mahāvaṃsa*. Writing in the University of Ceylon's, *History of Ceylon* I. 1 (Colombo: Ceylon University Press, 1959), Senarat Paranavitana notes that, "in addition to its being the principal source of our information for the early history of Ceylon, [the *Mahāvaṃsa*] is also a poem of no mean merit," p. 392. C. W. Nicholas, meanwhile, has remarked with regard to the *Mahāvaṃsa* that, "Ceylon is unique in the possession of a historical record so ancient, continuous and trustworthy, beginning with the occupation of the Island by civilised men in the sixth century B.C. and continuing the story, under each successuve king, for twenty two centuries." See Nicholas and Paranavitana, *A Concise History of Ceylon* (Colombo: Ceylon University Press, 1961), p. 11. Lastly, K. M. de Silva neatly sums up this perspective when he refers to the *Mahāvaṃsa* as "that irreplaceable source for the reconstruction of the early history of the island." See de Silva, *A History of Sri Lanka* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1981), p. 3.

[30] Rogers, "Historical images in the British period," p. 102.

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dead end that should be replaced by the model of European civilization.[31] The nationalists instead emphasized the continuities of Sinhala culture between past and present, bolstering the argument for the legitimacy of self-governance in the process.

In this context, the *vaṃsa* literature began to be read increasingly as historical documents with a distinctively political end. The *Mahāvaṃsa* and other Buddhist histories were thus employed to support nationalistic claims for Sri Lankan independence. Among the most vocal and influential proponents of this manner of reading the chronicles was Anagārika Dharmapāla, a lay religious leader who became an internationally known spokesperson for championing Buddhist interests.[32] Moreover, to the consternation of the colonial administrators, he repeatedly recalled a somewhat idealized vision of Sri Lanka's past from the *vaṃsakathā* to advance claims for the Sinhala community's right to rule themselves:

> There exists no race on this earth today that has had a more glorious, triumphant record of victory than the Sinhalese....Under the holy influence of the Tathagato's Religion of Righteousness, the people flourished. Kings spent all their wealth in building temples, public baths, *dagobas*, libraries, monasteries, rest houses, hospitals for man

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[31] Rogers, "Historical images in the British period," p. 102. Such a process closely resembles the nationalist project in nineteenth and century India which borrowed European discursive forms to forward claims for cultural pride and self-determination. See, for example, Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).

[32] Much scholarly research concerning the life and thought of Dharmapāla is available to us today, focusing mainly either on his role in articulating a vision of Buddhism suitable for the modern world or his contributions toward the formation of an ethnically based nationalism. See, for example, Gananath Obeyesekere, "Personal Identity and Cultural Crisis: The Case of Anagarika Dharmapala of Sri Lanka," in *The Biographical Process*, ed. Frank Reynolds and Donald Capps (The Hague: Mouton, 1976); Sarath Amunugama, "Anagarika Dharmapala (1864-1933) and the Transformation of Sinhala Buddhist Organization in a Colonial Setting," *Social Science Information* 24 (1985): 697-730; and Michael Roberts, "For Humanity. For the Sinhalese. Dharmapala as Crusading Bosat," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 56, no. 4 (Nov. 1997): 1006-1032.

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> and beast, schools, tanks, seven storied mansions, water works, and beautified the city of Anuradhapura,....What other nation on earth is there which could boast of a history of the island, a history of the Great Line of Kings, a history of Religion; a history of Sacred Architectural Shrines, a history of the Sacred Tree, a history of the Sacred Relics? The Sinhalese alone has a 'Dipavansa,' a 'Mahavansa,' a 'Sasana vansa,' a 'Thupa vansa,' a 'Bodhi vansa,' a 'Datha vansa.' [33]

Subsequently we find a strong tendency among many Sinhala authors to read Buddhist histories in terms of their national pride and conceptions of what constitutes the Sinhala community. For example, shortly after Independence in 1948, a layman named D. C. Vijayavardhana wrote a voluminous work called *The Revolt in the Temple*, in which he crafted a vision of history where Buddhism could be used to renew the country by promoting a humanitarian society consonant with the enlightened values and material progress of the West. Therein, the author frequently cites the "national chronicles" to illustrate how the Sinhala people once possessed a civilization that rose to the pinnacle of the ancient world, sustained by pious rulers who put the ethical, social philosophy of Buddhism into practice for the public welfare.[34] Therefore, in this way, an inclination towards reading the *vaṃsakathā* for reconstructing a factual account of history gradually shifted towards a tendency to read and interpret these texts as a blueprint or a charter for the nation.

In response to the nationalistic interpretations of the *vaṃsa*s in the context of Sri Lanka's current political and ethnic tensions between and among

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[33] Anagarika Dharmapala, *Return to Righteousness*, p. 481. Note that Dharmapala appears to refer to the *Sāsanavaṃsa* mistakenly as a Sri Lankan chronicle, since it is actually Burmese in origin. If, however, he meant the *Sāsanavaṃsadīpa*, his comment would be correct.

[34] D. C. Vijayavardhana, "The Rise and Fall of Sinhalese Kingdom," Chapt. 2 in the "popular edition" of his *The Revolt in the Temple* (Colombo: Sinha Publications, 1953), pp. 53-91.

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Sinhalas, Tamils, Muslims, and Catholics, numerous arguments have been put forth that either attempt to highlight the alleged anachronism of such readings or, alternatively, to identify the *vaṃsas* themselves as the source of a Sinhala nationalist ideology. From the former category, perhaps the most well-known critic of nationalistic readings of the *vaṃsas* is the historian R. A. L. H. Gunawardana who, in a number of stimulating articles and essays, has critiqued the influence of modern ideologies on interpreting Sri Lanka's past. Specifically he notes that the formation of a "Sinhala-Buddhist" identity is not revealed in the *vaṃsas*, but was in fact a recent invention that owed much to nineteenth-century racial theories propounded by European linguists and historians.[35] Moreover, it is primarily on the basis of this position that he has been engaged in a heated debate over the historical origins of Sinhala identity with the scholar K. N. O. Dharmadasa.[36] Yet the interest and intensity of their debate has

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[35] R. A. L. H. Gunawardana, "The People of the Lion: The Sinhala Identity and Ideology in History and Historiography," in Spencer, ed., *Sri Lanka*, pp. 70-78.

[36] In addition to his seminal "The People of the Lion" article, Gunawardana has also published a recent monograph entitled *Historiography in a Time of Ethnic Conflict: Construction of the Past in Contemporary Sri Lanka* (Colombo: Social Scientists Association, 1995). Dharmadasa's intial response to Gunawardana appeared in "'The People of the Lion': Ethnic Identity, Ideology, and Historical Revisionism in Contemporary Sri Lanka," *Sri Lanka Journal of the Humanities* 15, nos. 1 & 2 (1992): 1-35. More recently, he has published a rejoinder in his "The Roots of Sinhala Ethnic Identity in Sri Lanka: The Debate on the 'People of the Lion' Continued" *Ethnic Studies Report* 14, no. 2 (July 1996): 137-170. The debate between these two respectable Sri Lankan academics is largely over how far back one can posit a broad ethnic awareness among Sinhalas in history. Gunawardana argues that the use of the term "Sīhaḷa" in the ancient Pāli chronicles reflects a highly circumscribed grouping of persons claiming noble status by virtue of their descent from Prince Vijaya and his followers. As such, he is of the opinion that a Sinhala identity was gradually extended to larger groups of people, and only after the growth of the threat from South Indian kingdoms which espoused a militant form of Śaivite Hinduism and the long Cōḷa occupation in the 10th-11th centuries can one say that the term "Sinhala" came to denote a wide group of people who spoke the Sinhala language and were largely Buddhist. See his *Historiography in a Time of Ethnic Conflict*, pp. 51-55. Dharmadasa argues instead for a much earlier and broader application of a Sinhala ethnic identity that likely arose around the fifth century C.E. with the early development of the Sinhala language. He cites evidence from the tenth-century *Dhampiyā Aṭuvā Gāṭapadaya* to prove that a passage identifying the island people as *heḷu* (that is, Sinhala) shows that a linguistically defined ethnic identity was

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somewhat overshadowed Gunawardana's evaluation of the *vaṃsakathā* as Buddhist literature. Upon inspection we see that he has a considerably different interpretation of the ancient tradition of Buddhist historiography in Sri Lanka than those that we have encountered so far. Gunawardana argues that the *vaṃsa*s should not be understood as historical evidence of an archaic Sinhala consciousness, but instead should be seen as ideological instruments to formulate and propagate a unifying state ideology in ancient and medieval Sri Lanka.[37]

While Gunawardana is troubled by the alleged misreadings of the island's history to promote certain ethnonationalistic projects (and this, he points out, is applicable to individuals in both the Sinhala and Tamil communities of Sri Lanka), other critical assessments of the *vaṃsa*s by modern scholars often locate precisely such an agenda in the ancient and medieval histories themselves.[38] In other words, the *vaṃsa*s have been routinely read as *Heilsgeschichte*, or "sacred history," which represents the political and religious destinies of the Sinhala people as being inextricably linked.[39] What is significant about this line of interpretation is that it posits that the *Mahāvaṃsa*, and the other chronicles by extension, assumed relevance in Sri Lankan history

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in place during the first millennium of the Common Era. See his "The Roots of Sinhala Ethnic Identity in Sri Lanka, pp. 161-166.

37 Gunawardana, "The People of the Lion," pp. 57-58, 78. See also his "The Kinsmen of the Buddha: Myth as Political Charter in the Ancient and Early Medieval Kingdoms of Sri Lanka," *Sri Lanka Journal of Humanities* 2, No. 1 (June 1976): 53-62. In this article Gunawardana argues that one of the principal functions of the "myths" found in the *vaṃsa*s was to provide the justification for the political dominance of a specific dynasty in Sri Lankan history (p. 62).

38 R. A. L. H. Gunawardana, *Historiography in a Time of Ethnic Conflict*, pp. 9-10.

39 See, for example, Bardwell L. Smith, "The Ideal Social Order as Portrayed in the Chronicles of Ceylon," in Smith, ed., *Religion and Legitimation of Power in Sri Lanka*, p. 48.

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as a tool of legitimation for its monastic authors. Here we can detect a significant interpretive step beyond the earlier reservations of historians such as Geiger and Mendis for the historical accuracy of the chronicles. Specifically, from this newer point of view, the Buddhist chronicles of Sri Lanka are historically suspect not only for their mythological material, but for their ideological content as well. These scholarly critics identify and highlight the function of the *vaṃsa*s to legitimate the participation of the Sangha in politics, the righteousness of the Mahāvihāra fraternity of monks, and the idea of a Sinhala-Buddhist nation in the ancient and medieval periods. What follows from this is the implication, which is contested by Gunawardana, that the Buddhist chronicles of the past generated Buddhist nationalist sentiments and religio-ethnic identities that are somehow in continuity with those found in contemporary Sri Lanka.[40]

An important proponent of the view that reads the *vaṃsa*s as ideological tools of religio-nationalist legitimation is the learned German scholar Heinz Bechert. Referring to the ancient tradition of Buddhist historiography in Sri Lanka, Bechert emphasizes the role of the *vaṃsa*s in legitimating a new structural relationship between Sangha and State, wherein the one legitimates the other in the course of narrating history. The motivation of the author of the

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[40] Among a growing number of critics of this view, Jonathan Spencer has written in response to the suggestion that the *vaṃsa* chronicles were responsible for cultivating a national identity that, "[w]hile no one would deny that the chronicles, or certain episodes from them, have been used for this purpose in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, this sort of interpretation (widely accepted in Sri Lanka itself), which identifies conscious processes of nation-building in the distant past, has recently been challenged by liberal historians and social scientists in Sri Lanka." See Spencer,"The Past in the Present in Sri Lanka. *A Review Article*," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 37, no. 2 (April 1995), p. 360. The series of essays edited also by Spencer in *Sri Lanka* similarly emphasize the recent historical factors in determining modern conceptions of ethnic and national identities in contemporary Sri Lanka.

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Mahāvaṃsa, according to him, was to propagate an ideology that allowed for the participation and symbolic role of the Sangha in the political realm.[41] By this logic, Buddhist histories served to formulate and legitimate a political system in which nation and religion are interdependent entities. Bechert further cites "long-term political results" from these texts, wherein "the inseparable connection of national identity and Buddhist religion resulted in a feeling of responsibility towards nation and state and thus in the preservation of a particular entity, i.e., the state of the Sinhalese, throughout the centuries."[42] In other words, this type of reading locates the archaic roots of Sinhala nationalism in the *vaṃsa*s and implies that the problem is not in the misreading of history, but rather in the history itself.

The critical ramifications of this sort of interpretation become clearer when we note how this view of the *vaṃsa* literature affects the manners in which Buddhist history in Sri Lanka is represented. Quite often a theory pointing to the historical decline of Buddhism and its distortion at the hands of "cultural influences" accompanies the critique of the chronicles as "nationalistic" in tone.[43] The apparent concern and involvement of the Buddhist clergy with political affairs is seen to be problematic, as it might seem

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41 Bechert, "The Beginnings of Buddhist Historiography," p. 7.

42 Bechert, "The Beginnings of Buddhist Historiography," p. 9. See also Bechert's claim that the ancient chronicles provided a nationalistic ideology linking language, culture, and religion in his article "Sangha, State, Society, "Nation": Persistence of Traditions in "Post-Traditional" Buddhist Societies," *Daedalus* 102, no. 1 (Winter 1973), p. 88.

43 A reading of Sri Lanka's chronicles that emphasizes their effect of distorting or corrupting Buddhism is in many ways consonant with interpretations that somehow manage to isolate "Buddhism" apart from the cultures in which it is located. Walpola Rāhula's oft-read introductory text, *What the Buddha Taught*, rev. ed., (New York: Grove Press, 1974), provides a classic example of an interpretation that postulates a rootless "essence" of Buddhism that transcends any particular place or time in the world of culture.

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to compromise the ideal image of a monk who is aloof from worldly affairs. Trevor Ling, for example, finds fault with the alleged ideology of the *vaṃsakathā* for generating a different model of kingship that deviates from the traces of a model he locates in the Pāli Canon and in the Aśokan edicts. Following Bechert, Ling concludes that the chronicles supplied Sri Lankan Buddhists with an ideology that would replace the benevolent, trans-national rule of a king envisioned in the Pāli Canon with an exclusivistic Buddhist nationalism focused on the centralized power of a king who enjoys a symbiotic relationship with the Sangha.[44] In short, the *vaṃsa* literature is singled out as being causally related to the union of Buddhism and nation at an early point in Sri Lankan history. Moreover, for Ling, the very fact that Sri Lankan Buddhism has incorporated visions of kingship and a Buddhist polity from the *vaṃsa*s means that one should distinguish "Sinhalese Buddhism" from the form that is canonical and thus rightly known as "Theravāda."[45] In this sense, Ling presents an interpretation that is similar to, though considerably less informed than, the recent critique that Stanley Tambiah has made against the "political Buddhism" of twentieth-century Sri Lanka. Although Tambiah is careful to emphasize that the ethnic and nationalistic overtones of Sinhala Buddhism is largely a modern invention, he still suggests that the "religio-

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44 Ling, "Kingship and Nationalism in Pali Buddhism," pp. 66-68.

45 Ling, "Kingship and Nationalism in Pali Buddhism," pp. 60-61. We should note how Ling extends this idea even further by claiming that it is "Sinhalese Buddhism"which was exported to Burma and Thailand, and conversely that the Buddhist countries of Southeast Asia have historically been "Sinhalized" (pp. 60, 68). Smith, in his "The Ideal Social Order as Portrayed in the Chronicles of Ceylon," makes a similar, but much more responsible, claim when he argues that the royal sanction and support of Buddhism following its introduction to Sri Lanka by Mahinda can be seen as the beginning of Sinhalese Buddhism (p. 53).

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political associations of Buddhism set out in the monkish chronicles" does undermine the "substantively soteriological, ethical, and normative components of doctrinal Buddhism qua religion."[46]

It would seem clear to us then that one of the primary issues occupying modern scholars with regard to the *vaṃsa*s is to identify the extent to which Buddhist chronicles can be said to explain the development of Sri Lankan history and culture, especially in the modern period. The anthropologist Steven Kemper has discussed the contentious use of history in the modern discourse of nation-building in modern Sri Lanka, and nicely describes how images of Sri Lanka's past have been put to use by many politicians and some prominent monks in the twentieth century. He acknowledges that it is hard to determine exactly how much Sri Lankans in the past knew of their ancient origins, but suggests that it is likely that one of the effects of British colonialism was to make nineteenth-century monks and lay Buddhists less aware of the island's venerable past than whatever Sri Lankan Buddhists knew of it in the eighteenth century.[47] As Kemper sees it, the Buddhist *vaṃsakathā* acquired great symbolic significance when Sri Lankans began to campaign more aggressively for independence from colonial rule. Powerful links were then established in nationalistic discourse between the heroes and sacred places mentioned in the chronicles and the ways Sinhalas conceived of themselves and their country in

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[46] Stanley Jeyaraja Tambiah, *Buddhism Betrayed?: Religion, Politics, and Violence in Sri Lanka* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 58. Spencer, in "The Past in the Present in Sri Lanka," also notes that Tambiah's use of an essentialized notion of "doctrinal Buddhism" as against to what he finds practiced in Sri Lanka today tends to undermine the persuasiveness of his argument for discerning a rupture in the historical development of Buddhism in the island (p. 362).

[47] Kemper, *The Presence of the Past*, pp. 80-81.

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the present, and thus Kemper emphasizes the need to move beyond evaluations of Sinhala nationalism as anachronistic or chauvinistic, and to instead study it as an important mode of cultural reproduction.[48]

Apart from the historical debates over history and national identity, there is yet another common mode of reading Sri Lanka's Buddhist chronicles that stresses their literary qualities. Such an appraisal, however, has consistently taken the *vaṃsa*s to be parts of a larger and coherent literary tradition, and therefore the integrity of a single text, as well as one's ability to understand it, are thus largely defined by its place in a wider body of national literature. Moreover, this interpretive schema subjects the *vaṃsa*s, particularly the ones written in Sinhala, to certain values and aesthetic criteria gleaned from modern literary criticism. The fact that a number of Sri Lankan writers in the twentieth century have focused their critical evaluations of the style and language in Sinhala texts rather than Pāli may have much to do with a curiously modern distinction that attributes a literary identity upon Sinhala works and a religious identity upon works written in Pāli. The overwhelming focus of western Buddhologists upon Pāli texts at the expense of classical Sinhala works and the introduction of a colonial-sponsored university system that encouraged the analysis of Sinhala literature along the lines of western criticism have combined

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[48] Kemper, pp. 222-226. Kemper notes his agreement here with the anthropologist Marshall Sahlins who, in commenting on the false dichotomy whereby the past is viewed either as continuous with the present or discontinuous, has written, "every reproduction of culture in an alteration, insofar as in action, the categories by which a present world is orchestrated pick up some novel empirical content" (quoted in Kemper, *The Presence of the Past*, p. 224).

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to form a tendency for Sri Lankan scholars of language and literature to apply such a reading to the Sinhala chronicles instead of the Pāli ones.[49]

Among the pioneers of a Sinhala literary criticism, Martin Wickremasinghe and Ediweera Sarachchandra introduced and developed an approach whereby one evaluates Sinhala literature in accordance with particular stylistic and aesthetic conventions. Although Sarachchandra was more involved with critiquing the novel and other modern forms of Sinhala literature, Wickremasinghe utilized his own synthesis between Indian theories of aesthetics with modern European tenets of criticism to subject the major works of classical Sinhala literature to his critical evaluation.[50] Importantly, however, Wickremasinghe's literary approach was founded upon his own cultural values as much as his personal assessment of the aesthetic value of any given text. Thus he derided the "decadence" of much of the classical Sinhala literature for its slavish imitation of Sanskrit poetical devices (that is, *alaṅkāra*) and consequent neglect of the Sri Lankan environment and society of the time.[51] In fact when we read closely into what Wickremasinghe has to say about most

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[49] For a study into the devaluation of vernacular languages among students of Buddhism, see Charles Hallisey, "Roads Taken and Not Taken in the Study of Theravada Buddhism," in *Curators of the Buddha: The Study of Buddhism under Colonialism*, ed. Donald S. Lopez, Jr. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995). Ranjini Obeyesekere has contributed a valuable history of the development of literary criticism in twentieth-century Sri Lanka in her *Sinhala Writers and the New Critics* (Colombo: M.D. Gunasena & Co., 1974).

[50] K. N. O. Dharmadasa, "The Peradeniya School: The Origin and Consolidation of a Literary Movement," in *More Open Than Usual?: An Assessment of the Experiment in University Education at Peradeniya and Its Antecedents*, ed. R. A. L. H. Gunawardana (Peradeniya, Sri Lanka: University of Peradeniya, 1992, p. 121.

[51] Martin Wickremasinghe, *Sinhalese Literature* (Colombo: M.D. Gunasena & Co., n.d.), p. 22. Elsewhere Wickremasinghe laments a "unconscious habit of imitation" that modern Sinhalas have inherited from the literary elite in the medieval period. As a result of this imitative habit, he argues, contemporary Sinhala elites are allegedly reluctant to embrace a modern style of literature that appeals to the majority of the people. See his *Sinhala Language and Culture* (Dehiwala: Tissa Prakasakayo Ltd., 1975), pp. 92-95.

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classical Sinhala literature in general, it becomes very apparent that the criteria he uses to assess the literary value of such works are not found in the texts at all. Rather he decries the decadent influence of Sanskrit poetry through which sensual indulgence erased the sentiment of serene detachment in Buddhist stories, and the works themselves became divorced from the common experience of Sri Lankans at the time.[52] Thus, for example, Wickremasinghe's literary reading of Sinhala chronicles reflected aesthetic values that were particularly his own. In his influential *Sinhalese Literature*, which was published in Sinhala and then translated into English in 1949, he discounts the literary significance of the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* since, according to him, it is largely an unoriginal translation of the Pāli version and it is full of repetitive stock descriptions.[53]

Therefore, Wickremasinghe has contributed to the modern practice of reading medieval Sinhala works critically to identify their strengths and weaknesses as pieces of literature that reflect a contemporary cultural heritage. In other words, one reads the Sinhala histories from a perspective that is relentlessly rooted in the present, evaluating its content, language, and style according to recently established conventions of writing, as well as conceptions of a specifically Sinhala culture. We can see this approach at work when we contrast the comments on the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* from two highly respected scholars who have written extensively on Sinhala literature. Puñcibandara

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[52] Wickremasinghe, *Sinhalese Literature*, p. 18. In this vein, Ranjini Obeyesekere has argued that the source of some of Wickremasinghe's critiques on classical Sinhala literature was "traditionalist" and based on his belief that Sanskrit influences were essentially Hindu in nature and thus alien to the Sinhala culture which was, according to him, Buddhist in spirit. See her *Sinhala Writers and the New Critics*, pp. 38-57.

[53] Wickremasinghe, *Sinhalese Literature*, p. 91.

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Sannasgala has pointed out that the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* follows the compositional style of other Sinhala works such as *Butsaraṇa*, and thus can be expected to arouse the same pleasure in a reader who appreciates its clever use of similes.[54] Yet this positive assessment is based primarily upon how he assumes a modern reader would respond to the text, and thus he does not attempt to probe further into the possible effects and significance of the text on a medieval audience. Sannasgala simply notes by way of conclusion that the composition of the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* makes it compare favorably to other classical Sinhala prose texts.[55]

The urge to compare the aesthetic value of the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* to other classical works is also evident in Ananda Kulasuriya's discussion of the text, although his assessment of it is considerably less positive. For instance, he notes that despite some instances of well-written and charming passages, overall the descriptive elegance and the brilliance in style is rather uneven in the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa*.[56] Moreover, for Kulasuriya, the mistakes of the author and his choice of uncharming words in the composition of the text combine to weaken its literary value, and as such the text can be said to mark the beginning of a decline in Sinhala prose works in general.[57] What should be clear to us by now is that even modern literary readings of Buddhist chronicles privilege a "way of seeing the world," that is to say, for what they reveal about the literature of the

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54 Puñcibandara Sannasgala, *Siṅhala Sāhityaya Vaṁśaya* (1962; reprint, Colombo: Cultural Department, 1998), p. 195.

55 Sannasgala, *Siṅhala Sāhityaya Vaṁśaya*, p. 196.

56 Ananda Kulasuriya, *Sinhala Sāhityaya I* (Maharagama, Sri Lanka: Saman Press, 1961), pp. 208-211.

57 Kulasuriya, *Sinhala Sāhityaya I*, pp. 212-213.

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Sinhala people in general. Scholars of Sinhala literature appear more concerned with evaluating the quality of a given text on the basis of standards which are external to it, such as the excellence of poetic description and overall literary merit. Thus, from our point of view, common literary readings of the *vaṃsa*s suffer not only for being limited almost exclusively to Sinhala works, but also for their tendency to overlook what these texts may have contributed to the lives of medieval Buddhists.

I.2 READING THE *THŪPAVAṂSA*S

In reading the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s as works that manifest particular religious sensibilities and ethical concerns, it would be wise to keep in mind the range of interpretations that modern readers have already given the *vaṃsa*s as a whole. One unifying characteristic that unites these disparate positions and allow us to consider them more broadly as "modernist" is their consistency in viewing the *vaṃsa*s as repositories of historical, cultural, or literary "facts" that reflect objective truths about the real world—such as, the chronology of Indian kings, the historical development of the Sangha in Sri Lanka, the fomentation of modern Sinhala Buddhist nationalism, or the role of literature in defining Sinhala culture.[58] All of these studies are of course valuable for their respective contributions to our knowledge of Sri Lanka's past and present. Nonetheless, I would claim that the vast majority of modern

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[58] For a sustained critique of modernist readings of history, see Keith Jenkins, *On "What is History?": From Carr and Elton to Rorty and White* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995). Therein, Jenkins argues that the old "certainties" of "modernist" renditions of history—objectivity, disinteredness, the 'facts', unbiasedness, truth, etc.,—are no longer sustainable in contemporary society where the perspectival, ideological, and ultimately imaginative components of historical discourse have been exposed (pp. 7-10).

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scholars have not yet equipped us to probe deeper into the composition and reading of the *vaṃsas* themselves, and thus we have barely begun to grasp the significance of history-writing in medieval Sri Lanka.[59]

Recently, however, Steven Collins has suggested an alternative way of reading the *vaṃsas* of Sri Lanka that calls into question the tendency of many contemporary scholars to associate them with modern expressions of "Sinhala-Buddhist nationalism." His methodological approach is instructive for us, since he focuses his analysis upon the language and forms of the narratives found in the *vaṃsas*. Collins stresses that the chronicles are texts "about time," providing a linear historical narrative that expresses and embodies "the repetitive interweaving of timeless nirvanized Buddhahood with the texture of all time, past, present, and future."[60] As I understand him, Collins wishes to emphasize how the *vaṃsas* contributed to Buddhist thinking about time, wherein the passage of historical time is held in tension with concepts of endless, repetitive *saṃsāra* and the finality of Nirvana, which is outside time altogether. Meanwhile, he criticizes "triumphalist" interpretations of the *Mahāvaṃsa* as a means of legitimating Buddhist kingship, and points out that the succession of good, bad, and indifferent kings serves more plaintively to reinforce the notion that impermanence destroys everything in the world, with

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59 One early exception to the rule is Wilhelm Geiger's pioneering study, *The Dīpavaṃsa and Mahāvaṃsa: And their Historical Development in Ceylon* (Colombo: H. C. Cottle, Govt. Printer, 1908). Herein Geiger examines the content and style of the two earliest extant chronicles, and includes a brief consideration of supplementary Pāli and Sinhala historical texts. From the title of the work we should not be surprised to learn that Geiger's study is much stronger and more systematic with respect to the *Dīpavaṃsa* and *Mahāvaṃsa* than to the other chronicles.

60 Steven Collins, *Nirvana and other Buddhist Felicities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 256.

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the exception of those who have attained Nirvana.[61] While Collins's discussion differs slightly from my argument here in that he sees the *vaṃsa*s as transformative primarily for Buddhist thought (his "Pali imaginaire") rather than of emotion and moral subjectivity, his work still offers a more fruitful approach towards reading Buddhist histories. By focusing on the motif of time, he points to the necessity of reading the *Mahāvaṃsa* closely to interpret what it puts forth as an argument or a theme for reflection. In this way we begin to discover that the *vaṃsa*s themselves are works that convey something about how the authors understood their existence in the world.

Thus, if we pay attention to the literary qualities and subjects of concern manifested in the *vaṃsakathā*, we can begin to address several important questions that have been generally overlooked by modern readers of Sri Lanka's Buddhist histories. A fundamental question for us to consider is why ancient and medieval Buddhists should have written history at all? The fact that there have been so many historical narratives written in both Pāli and Sinhala has been acknowledged and serves as testimony to an abiding interest in history-writing among Sri Lankan Buddhists. Yet beyond the occasional survey of *vaṃsa*s that has appeared in print, we still have not explored what allows us to refer to Buddhist histories as both "Buddhist" and "history" as such.[62] In

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61 Collins, *Nirvana and other Buddhist Felicities*, p. 268.

62 I am indebted to Barbara Ambrose for first posing this intriguing question to me. Among the scholarly works that take the notion of a "Buddhist history" for granted while surveying the contents of the *vaṃsa*s, one may refer to B.C. Law, *On the Chronicles of Ceylon* (1947; reprint, AES Reprint: Delhi, 1994); Kanai Lal Hazra, *The Buddhist Annals and Chronicles of South-East Asia* (Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers: New Delhi, 1986); G.P. Malalasekera, "The Pāli Chronicles," Chpt. VII in his *The Pāli Literature of Ceylon* (1928; reprint, Colombo: M.D. Gunasena, 1994); C.E. Godakumbura, "Historical Literature," Chpt. XII in his *Sinhalese Literature*, (Colombo: The Colombo Apothecaries' Co., 1955); L.S. Perera, "The Pali Chronicle of Ceylon," in *Historians of India, Pakistan and Ceylon*, ed. C.H. Philips, (London: Oxford University Press, 1961); Ananda S.

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addition, we might ask what role or roles did historical texts play in this corner of the Buddhist world, and to whom were they directed. It may also be fruitful to consider whether Buddhist *vaṃsa*s only reported events that had occurred previously, or whether they worked to bring something entirely new into the world.

In general, we might say that what is lacking from the modern study of Sri Lanka's *vaṃsa* literature is an approach that moves from a text as a single literary act outwards, considering historical and literary aspects as interwoven and mutually reinforcing. Thus, the shift in interpretive lenses that I recommend is fundamentally a shift in directionality. Instead of viewing Buddhist histories as straightforward expressions of an historical period and cultural system, we will proceed from the position that the *vaṃsa*s were involved in shaping individuals and the world in which they lived.[63] Put differently, a close study of the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s may be profitably used to examine medieval Sri Lankan conceptions of how historical narratives could effect an ethical transformation in readers and listeners more generally. Rather than simply presuming that a vague notion of the historical context for the *Thūpavaṃsa*s can help us to understand these texts, we will proceed along the lines of a literary analysis to look for suggestions as to what the *Thūpavaṃsa*s were envisioned to contribute to their audiences and the world.

Kulasuriya, "The Minor Chronicles and Other Traditional Historical Writings in Sinhalese and Their Historical Value," in *The Ceylon Historical Journal*, XXXV, Nos. 1-4, (Oct. 1978): 1-33.

[63] I would like to acknowledge Charles Hallisey for helping me to develop this idea in a number of conversations. Inden alludes to a similar idea when he describes knowledge as being "underdetermined by reality" and cultural systems as things that are made and not simply found. By questioning our capacity to grasp and represent an external reality as it is, Inden shifts the analytical focus from underlying essences to the actions of humans in shifting historical circumstances. See, for example, his *Imagining India*, p. 264.

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The second chapter of this work begins by questioning the assumption that the *vaṃsakathā* of Sri Lanka represent a coherent genre of texts that were written and read as documentary sources of history in much the same manner that we tend to use them today. Therefore, instead of viewing the *Thūpavaṃsa*s only as historical narratives that tell a story and reconstruct the past, we shall examine them closely as physical texts whose materiality speaks to the ways in which they were composed and encountered in medieval Sri Lanka. We will see that the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s are not mirror reproductions of each other, but in fact differ significantly in content and style. Moreover, both texts reconstructed a common narrative based upon a variety of antecedent sources and presented a familiar story with different literary forms. This investigation into the production of the *Thūpavaṃsa*s is directed towards examining whence a Buddhist historical narrative took shape. I contend that the varied origins of historical narrative in the *Thūpavaṃsa*s, as well as the historicity of these texts themselves, may suggest to us something about what they were designed to accomplish. Furthermore, we will consider what it meant to write in either a cosmopolitan language like Pāli, which is to say, a medium that could be read and recited by monastics and learned lay scholars in other lands, or a local language like Sinhala, which was circumscribed to a more immediate linguistic group within Sri Lanka.

The third chapter proceeds to examine the respective narratives of the *Thūpavaṃsa*s in order to present the argument that these texts are better read as works of literature that give rise to certain effects in an audience. Moreover, we will consider the fictive qualities of historical narratives wherein events are

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chosen and organized around a plot that guides the reader and listener in interpreting the story. The Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s use language rhetorically in order to create good readers and listeners who will conceive of the past as having occurred for their sakes. We will make use of theories from the philosophy of history and literary criticism that attend to the creative qualities of historical narrative, yet also highlight how a text anticipates and works to create a model reader who will read (or listen) in accordance with what is desired by the author and designed by the narrative. From this, we will see that Buddhist history in the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s was written to move an audience to think about themselves and their world in particular ways, generating a moral subjectivity among individual readers and listeners.

Chapter four shifts the focus to the aesthetic effects of the *Thūpavaṃsa*s as texts that generate ethically productive emotions in their audiences. As such, we can identify an apparent poetics of Buddhist history, as the Pāli and Sinhala narratives employ various forms of speech and images that appear directed at having aesthetic effects upon an audience. Specifically, the *Thūpavaṃsa*s display conspicuous attempts at generating serene joy, pious confidence, and gratitude, which in turn serve to implicate their readers and listeners in relationships of dependence and intimacy with the Buddha. The knowing subject of history is, in this way, also made into a feeling subject who experiences certain sentiments in response to the text. By embellishing the narrative of history with poetic forms and evocative imagery, the *Thūpavaṃsa*s work to move and delight an audience through skillful and creative uses of language. These texts, moreover, display efforts to involve readers and

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listeners with their narratives, showing them how history bears directly upon their lives and conditions their future happiness.

The fifth chapter examines how the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s both enable and compel individuals to engage in acts of devotionalism, thus completing the ethical transformation of an individual who encounters their narratives. This section thus details how these texts give rise to real effects in the world beyond the written page. The model reader and listener of the *Thūpavaṃsa*s is imagined and constituted as a "virtuous person" (*satpuruṣa*) who becomes fully aware of being a beneficiary of history and, as a result, acts upon his or her perceived moral obligations for having benefited from the past deeds of the Buddha. In short, the audiences of the *Thūpavaṃsa*s are conditioned to perform acts of veneration (*pūjā*) at relic shrines in imitation of the characters in the narratives who are themselves depicted as feeling serene joy and gratitude in response to learning that they too have benefitted from what was done in the past. At this point, the ethical transformation of the reader or listener of Buddhist history has been completed. Having learned that they have been foreseen and their needs anticipated by the Buddha and other virtuous agents in the past, the readers and listeners of the *Thūpavaṃsa*s are prompted to engage in ritualized displays of devotion in accordance with their newly ascribed status as moral agents constructed by the narrartives of Buddhist history.

Throughout this study, I will argue that the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s suggest that Buddhist history-writing was primarily an ethical endeavor that represented the past as a history of deeds enabling present and

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future generations of Buddhists to work towards the attainment of a variety of Buddhist felicities, such as an auspicious rebirth in heaven or on earth, as well as the eventual attainment of Nirvana.[64] As such, history-writing could be described as a religious practice that engendered moral subjectivities and devotional acts among the authors and audiences of their texts. The language and narrative form in the *Thūpavaṃsa*s are transformative in that they produce certain effects and entail particular responses to the stories that they relate.[65] The *Thūpavaṃsa*s implicitly establish a relationship to the past wherein one becomes aware of and grateful for the tremendous efforts that the Buddha made to enhance the well-being of those who would come after him. At the same time, the *Thūpavaṃsa*s are ethical in the sense that Michel Foucault describes ethics as *rapport à soi*, by which he means the relationship that one ought to have with oneself, or how one constitutes oneself as a moral subject of one's own actions.[66] In this way, an encounter with the narratives of the *Thūpavaṃsa*s represents an activity through which one cares for oneself, in as much as one is made aware of being dependent upon the Buddha, and that this condition is for one's own good. Buddhist history therefore establishes a sense of subjectivity and implicates a "patient" of the Buddha in a relationship to the past that defines one's moral life in the present.

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[64] I use the term "felicity" in the manner presented by Collins in *Nirvana and Other Buddhist Felicities*, pp. 109-111. Therein, he helpfully points out that Pāli Buddhist texts often value a wider range of states of prosperity and happiness than just simply the attainment of Nirvana.

[65] For a similar argument on how Buddhist story narratives can be thought of as transformative of moral life, see Charles Hallisey and Anne Hansen, "Narrative, Sub-Ethics, and the Moral Life: Some Evidence from Theravāda Buddhism," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 24, no. 2 (Fall 1996): 305-327.

[66] Michel Foucault, *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: The New Press, 1997), p. 263.

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Interpretations of Sri Lanka's ancient and medieval Buddhist histories to date have almost without exception overlooked the ethical significance of recalling what the Buddha and others did in the past. A study of the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s, in this way, represents an attempt to come to terms with how Buddhist literature could be conceived as transformative, wherein encounters with texts are deemed to carry significant moral and soteriological effects. More often than not, to read premodern Buddhist history as essentially an exercise in political and religious legitimation constitutes an attempt to see the past through the present, infusing contemporary functionalist interpretations and concerns over the country's current political situation into the narratives of the *vaṃsakathā*. Rather, as we have already intimated, Buddhist history typically reads the present through the past, since that which is recalled from earlier times is envisioned to have had direct and immediate consequences upon one's life in the present. In other words, the Buddhist history-writing of medieval Sri Lanka places profound value upon knowing the past in order to recognize how one has benefited from it. As a result of the subjectivity that comes from an encounter with historical narratives, a reader or listener is impressed with habits of thought, emotional dispositions, and an impulse to enage in devotional acts. The power of Buddhist history, then, rests not with efforts to make particular conceptions of Sinhala identity and Buddhist statehood appear natural and self-evident, however much the *vaṃsa*s are used to those ends in Sri Lanka today. Rather, as we will see below, the transformative potency of Buddhist histories comes from their capacity to engender emotions and instill obligations that

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contribute to the shaping of a devotee into a virtuous person who is aware of and acts upon one's relationship to the Buddha and others from the past.

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CHAPTER TWO

THE PRODUCTION OF BUDDHIST HISTORY

As we have seen in the preceding chapter, Sri Lanka's Buddhist history has meant different things to various people in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Yet for all the theories and interpretations offered to account for Buddhist history-writing, few have seriously considered the possibility that our views and uses of history today may differ dramatically from those of the people who wrote, copied, read and listened to historical narratives in medieval Sri Lanka. Rather than simply taking the *vaṃsakathā* as relatively straightforward attempts to document the way things were or the way things should have been, I propose that we consider them as texts written to act upon and effect changes in their audiences and the surrounding culture.[67] Buddhist histories typically claim to cause such effects, and thus it is incumbent upon us to investigate the nature of these claims in an effort to understand what these texts were envisioned to accomplish. I will posit here that the first impulse of Sri Lankan Buddhist histories is to perfect the knowers of the world and not simply a knowledge of it.[68] This argument, however, requires a detailed

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[67] See chapter four below for several examples wherein Buddhist histories claim to possess an aesthetic potency that transforms those who encounter their narratives. One particularly colorful example of this can be found in an account of the Buddha's stepmother, Mahāprajāpati Gautamī, presented in the twelfth-century Sinhala text called *Pūjāvāliya*: "Therefore her detailed story will make the face-lotuses of virtuous persons blossom. It will make the white water lilies, namely their minds, bloom. It will make the great creeper, namely merit, flower. It will be an elixir to their ear. Therefore it should be listened to very carefully by virtuous persons." See *Pjv* 543: *Esē heyin ovungē visituru vū kathā satpuruṣayangē mukhapadmayan prabodha karavayi. Sit namāti kaumadayan pubuduvayi. Kusal namāti mahaliyaya mal ganvayi. Karṇayaṭa rasāyana karavayi. Esē heyin satpuruṣayan visin sāvadhāna va ma āsiya yutu.*

[68] Stephen Owen puts forths a similar claim in his illuminating study of medieval Chinese poetry. Owen, however, chooses to hold the transformation of the poet and the

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examination of the historical texts themselves. Accordingly, in this chapter I will begin by inquiring into the production and existence of the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s as material texts whose composition and circulation in the world contributes to an understanding of the manner in which some medieval Sri Lankans conceived of history and its uses.

I.1 THE SOURCES OF BUDDHIST HISTORY

It may be said that one of the cardinal tenets of modern historiography is that the historian ought to rely solely on his or her sources to reconstruct the past as it really was.[69] The documents that a historian uncovers are typically prized for their transparent ability to reveal what led up to and lay behind historical events. There are, of course, a growing number of critics of that assumption, but nevertheless it represents a commitment that is generally held by modern students of history.[70] My intention to consider the sources that informed the writing of medieval Buddhist histories and, more specifically, the

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transformation of the outer world in a greater opposition than with which I am comfortable. For Owen's argument, see his *Traditional Chinese Poetry and Poetics: Omen of the World* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), pp. 191-192. In contrast, I see continuous suggestions that to change a reader or listener of Buddhist history is to make a change that has direct ramifications on the outer world. My discussion of Buddhist devotional practice (*pūjā*) as impelled by historical narratives in Chapter Five of this dissertation presents my position in detail.

69 Keith Jenkins, *On 'What is History?*, p. 72.

70 Among the more insightful critiques of uncritical methods of historiography, see Michel Foucault, *The Archeaology of Knowledge: And the Discourse on Language*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), Paul Veyne, *Writing History: Essay on Epistemology*, trans. Mina Moore-Rinvolucri (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1984), Michel de Certeau, *The Writing of History*, trans. Tom Conley (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), Dominic LaCapra, *Rethinking Intellectual History: Texts, Contexts, Language* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), Keith Jenkins, *Re-thinking History* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), and Mark Poster, *Cultural History and Postmodernity: Disciplinary Readings and Challenges* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997).

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Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s is motivated not by a desire to evaluate the relative "truth" or accuracy of their narratives, but rather to make a preliminary assement of how and why these texts were composed. Indeed, our contemporary conceptions of "author," "text," and "genre" are not self-evident categories that we can assume will apply likewise in thirteenth-century Sri Lanka. The practice of history-writing in medieval Sri Lanka entailed culturally specific ideas about what an author does, what makes up a text, and what a text can do.

Consequently, part of the task of understanding what history-writing constituted in medieval Sri Lankan Buddhist communities is to examine how sources were used to produce historical narratives. If, as we might expect, histories were compiled according to a literary tradition that differs from our modern disciplinary norms, it behooves us to attempt to find out what practices and principles were employed in the writing of Buddhist histories. Indeed, a difference in the use of source materials by medieval Buddhist chroniclers may point to a general effort towards writing a text that affects an audience in desired ways, and not simply a text that reflects a true and coherent picture of the past. In this way our study should prove useful in illustrating some strategies and concerns behind textual production in medieval Sri Lanka, and this in turn may contribute further towards a more general understanding of the literary history of Theravāda Buddhism.

The Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s existed for centuries in an environment where texts and the people able to write or read them were relatively rare. Texts were hand-written upon dried palm leaves and bound

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loosely together with string passed between two pieces of wood.[71] In short, twelfth and thirteenth-century texts were produced in the traditional manner as manuscripts, each one with its own unique characteristics and qualities. The historian John Dagenais has contributed an original and highly persuasive argument along those lines on the way texts were produced and read in the "manuscript culture" of medieval Castile in Spain.[72] He emphasizes that medieval manuscripts were, as a rule, much more fluid and dynamic than modern critical editions, and that one needs to look at the mechanical processes of commentary, translation, adaptation, reworking, and copying to discern how texts were transmitted and encountered through history.[73] For Dagenais, a medieval "text" is akin to a living entity that may undergo change each time it is read and rewritten by scribes:

> Our first question , then, must not be what the medieval text (that is, the reconstructed authorial work) signifies, but how that text came into being and moved physically through the world to which it belonged. Once we understand this, perhaps we can begin to perceive new ways in which signification occurred despite, through, and around the uncertain process by which medieval manuscript texts were created. I would take as a focal point for the study of medieval literature, then, the process by which an individual, concrete manuscript book came into being, grew through accretions of gloss, commentary, and irrelevant marginal jottings, moved through both space and time, and was, in many cases, transformed into another individual, concrete manuscript book.[74]

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[71] For a very useful and detailed overview of the processes undertaken to create a palm-leaf manuscript in premodern Sri Lanka, see W. A. de Silva, *Catalogue of the Palm Leaf Manuscripts in the Library of the Colombo Museum*, Vol. I (Colombo: Ceylon Government Press, 1938), pp. xiii-xxi.

[72] See John Dagenais, *The Ethics of Reading in Manuscript Culture: Glossing the* Libro de Buen Amor (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

[73] Dagenais, *The Ethics of Reading in Manuscript Culture*, pp. xvi-xvii.

[74] Dagenais, *The Ethics of Reading in Manuscript Culture*, p. 18.

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Dagenais's provocative study offers us a strong reminder that the *Thūpavaṃsa*s existed in a world where texts were copied and often altered with impunity. It is indeed impossible to ascertain exactly how the Pāli *Thūpavaṃsa* written by Vācissara Thera and the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* of Parākrama Paṇḍita existed at the time of their compositions around the twelfth and thirteenth centuries C.E. The *Thūpavaṃsa*s were produced and read in the manuscript culture of premodern Sri Lanka, and therefore they were open to various revisions and glosses made by scribes, readers, and reciters at any given time.

When the historical coherence of a text is subject to doubt, a reading of that text necessarily looks to the sources and formal characteristics that can yield insights into how it was composed or transmitted. A consensus of scholars identify two bodies of literatures that formed the basis for all subsequent production of Buddhist texts in Sri Lanka. The first corpus is the Pāli Canon, which traditionally has been held to contain the actual "word of the Buddha" (*buddhavācana*) preserved in "three baskets" (Tipiṭaka), or collections, of scriptures dealing with monastic disciplinary codes, discursive teachings, and scholastic doctrines respectively. Tradition holds that the complete Pāli Tipiṭaka was put to writing during King Vaṭṭagāmaṇī's reign (43-29 B.C.E.) at a council of five hundred monks at the Aluvihare monastery in central Sri Lanka.[75] The

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[75] Gunaratne Panabokke, *History of the Buddhist Sangha in India and Sri Lanka* (Sri Lanka: The Postgraduate Institute of Pali and Buddhist Studies, 1993), pp. 106-107. See, for example, *Mhv* XXXIII. 102-103: "In former times, very wise monks transmitted the texts of the Three Baskets and its commentaries orally. But seeing the adversity to living beings, the monks who assembled at that time caused the writing of the Dhamma in books for the sake of remaining a long time." Cf. the following account taken from a medieval Sinhala text called *Nikāya Saṅgraha*: "Five hundred *arahants*, having assembled at Alulena in the region named Mātula with the support of a certain chieftain, reciting the texts, caused the Tripiṭaka Dharma, which had come down orally through the lineage of these Great Elders . . ., to be written down." See *Nik* 10: *[Y]ana mē mahāsthavira paramparāven mukhapālivaśayen*

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second corpus of literature that served as a basis for subsequent textual production in Sri Lanka was the collections of commentarial material in Sinhala, Pāli and some Dravidian languages. In this instance, the tradition also recognizes a large body of expository and narrative material preserved in the form of commentaries (*aṭṭhakathā*) dating as far back as the Elder Mahinda's arrival in Sri Lanka in the third century B.C.E.[76] It is from these largely Sinhala collections that the fifth-century scholar-monk Buddhaghosa is said to have begun the process of translating the commentaries on the Tipiṭaka into Pāli, and indeed he frequently cites various *aṭṭhakathā* works that he uses when commenting upon the canonical Pāli texts.[77]

The composition of the Pāli Canon and its accompanying commentaries is a large and complicated subject that falls hopelessly outside the parameters of the present study. Suffice it to say that in all likelihood the actual development of the Theravāda canon and its commentaries was a gradual and even somewhat contentious process. Thus, Gunaratne Panabokke can maintain that even though the council at Aluvihare in the first century B.C.E. settled the canonical texts and commentaries up to a certain point, further accumulations and interpretations developed and were added to these works up to the time of

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pāvata āvāvū tripiṭakadharmaya ektarā jana padādhipayakhugē pansiyayak rahatanvahansē mātula naṁ danavvehi alulena vāḍahiňda pot saňgāyanā koṭa liyavÿ sēka.

[76] E. W. Adikaram, *Early History of Buddhism in Ceylon* (1946; reprint, Dehiwala, Sri Lanka: Buddhist Cultural Centre, 1994), pp. 10-11.

[77] N. A. Jayawickrama points out that after the commentaries that were allegedly produced at the first recitals in India and subsequently brought to Sri Lanka by the Ven. Mahinda had been translated into an ancient Sinhalese Prakrit, those early Sinhala commentaries became increasingly archaic with the passage of time. Thus he maintains that by the fifth century CE, when Buddhaghosa began his work, the extant exegetical material which had been written down and that which was transmitted orally had become unintelligible to monks in other lands, and consequently this justified its translation into Pāli. See Jayawickrama, trans. and ed., *The Inception of Discipline and the Vinaya Nidāna* (1962; reprint, London: Pali Text Society, 1986), pp. xix-xx.

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Buddhaghosa.[78] Furthermore, aside from evidence of slight emendations to the Pāli Canon in the centuries after it was first written down, some scholars have suggested that the writing of the canon was motivated by reasons other than just famine and contemporary political unrest in the island. E. W. Adikaram has insightfully noted that the Pāli Canon was written by monks from the Mahāvihāra monastery during a period when the rival Abhayagiri monastery arose with the support of the king. It is for this reason, he suggests, that the actual composition of the texts occured in Mātula, far from the royal capital of Anurādhapura.[79] More recently, Steven Collins has expanded upon this idea to argue that the efforts of the Mahāvihārin monks to write down and, in effect, standardize the canon and commentaries reflects a strategy to define and legitimate their monastic lineage in terms of an historicist orthodoxy that, in turn, has had a lasting effect upon the characterization of Theravāda Buddhism in South and Southeast Asia.[80]

The textual history of the *aṭṭhakathā* literature is even more varied and difficult to describe than the canon. Scholars are hindered in their attempts to do so because those texts were translated back and forth between Sinhala and Pāli, some of the commentaries apparently persisted in an oral form, and nearly all of

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[78] Gunaratne Panabokke, *History of the Sangha in India and Sri Lanka*, p. 107. E. W. Adikaram supplies a specific example of this when he identifies a reference in the *Paramatthajotikā* claiming that the Sinhala *Mahā-aṭṭhakathā* lacks any comments upon the last two verses of the Kokālika Sutta in *Sutta Nipāta*, and thus he concludes that they were later additions to the canonical text after it was written down at Aluvihare. See his *Early History of Buddhism in Ceylon*, pp. 11-12.

[79] E. W. Adikaram, *Early History of Buddhism in Ceylon*, p. 79. Adikaram also notes therein that the two most important literary events in the island—the writing down of the Pāli canon and the translation of the commentaries into Pāli—occured at times when the Mahāvihāra monastery was held less favorably by the king than the Abhayagirivihāra (p. 94).

[80] Steven Collins, "On the Very Idea of the Pāli Canon," *Journal of the Pali Text Society* 15 (1990), pp. 101-102.

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the most ancient commentaries died out sometime during the first millenium of the common era. Still, it is presumed that this material contained glosses and elaborations on the Pāli Canon that were taught by learned monks and transmitted through history by a lineage of pupils through a combination of memorization and writing. For his part, Adikaram has identified at least twenty-eight different sources of written and oral commentaries which were preserved mainly in Sinhala, and although they are no longer extant, they are frequently mentioned by name in the later Pāli commentaries.[81] Moreover, there is some disagreement over why these ancient commentaries disappeared. Interpreting a statement in the *Buddhaghosuppatti* that describes how the Sinhala commentaries were voluntarily burned after Buddhaghosa completed his translation of them into Pāli as not literally true, G. P. Malalasekera still maintains with the tradition that the Pāli commentaries completely eclipsed the older Sinhala sources.[82] Presumably, then, the older commentaries were made defunct by the superior versions produced by Buddhaghosa in the fifth century. Yet C. E. Godakumbura, on the other hand, argues that some of the ancient Sinhala commentaries were still in use up to the tenth century, since later texts such as *Dhampiyā Aṭuvā Gāṭapadaya* occasionally cite them.[83]

The composition of the ancient and medieval *vaṃsa* literature is also a product of the dynamic interplay between canonical and commentarial writing in Pāli and Sinhala. There is evidence that the medieval Buddhist chronicles of Sri

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81 E. W. Adikaram, *Early History of Buddhism in Ceylon*, p. 10.

82 G. P. Malalasekera, *The Pali Literature of Ceylon* (1928; reprint, Kandy, Sri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society, 1995), pp. 98-99.

83 C. E. Godakumbura, *Sinhalese Literature* (Colombo: The Colombo Apothecaries' Co., 1955), pp. 3-4.

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Lanka drew material from both, but nevertheless a general scholarly consensus has emerged over the commentarial antecendents for the *vaṃsas*.[84] For example, Geiger maintains that a number of non-extant texts mentioned in *Vaṃsatthappakāsinī* refer to older commentaries in Sinhala and Pāli that were used in the composition of the *Mahāvaṃsa*, as well as the later histories. He draws particular attention to ancient commentaries, alternatively called *Porāṇaṭṭhakathā* and *Sīhalaṭṭhakathā*, that he maintains were written in Sinhala prose with Pāli verse, and supplied the material for Mahānāma's fifth or sixth-century *Mahāvaṃsa*.[85] Malalasekera, following Oldenberg, further suggests that the *Mahāvaṃsa* began as an introduction to the ancient Sinhala commentary on the Tipiṭaka housed in the monastic library at the Mahāvihāra in Anurādhapura.[86]

Several of the ancient commentaries noted in *Vaṃsatthappakāsinī*, namely the *Uttaravihāraṭṭhakathā*, *Vinayaṭṭhakathā*, *Mahāvaṃsaṭṭhakathā*,

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[84] Godakumbura has further suggested that the *vaṃsas* would have been explicitly classified under the term *aṭṭhakathā*: "Among the Sinhalese in the early days any work which did not fall within the Pitakas was considered an *atthakatha*; and thus the *Dipavamsa* and the *Mahavamsa* fell into that category, although they were not always referred to as such." See his article "The Dipavamsa and the Mahavamsa" in *The Ceylon Historical Journal* XXV, nos. 1-4 (Oct. 1978), p. 151.

[85] Geiger, *The Dīpavaṃsa and Mahāvaṃsa: And Their Historical Development in Ceylon* (Colombo: H. C. Cottle, Government Printer, 1908), pp. 43-47. Cf. Adikaram, *Early History of Buddhism in Ceylon*, p. 22; G. P. Malalasekera, ed., *Vaṃsatthappakāsinī: Commentary on the Mahāvaṃsa* (London: Pali Text Society, 1935), p. lvii; Bimala Churn Law, *On the Chronicles of Ceylon* (1947; reprint, New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1994), pp. 12-14; and G. C. Mendis, *The Pāli Chronicles of Sri Lanka* (Colombo: Karunaratne & Sons, 1996), p. 15. The general consensus on the original commentarial source of Sinhala prose and Pāli verse is actually more fractious than I have presented it here, as Malalasekera has staked out a position that the source referred to as the "*Porāṇas*" represents the sayings of esteemed "Teachers of old" and is not, *pace* Geiger, Oldenberg, and Adikaram, equivalent to a definite commentary called *Porāṇaṭṭhakathā* (pp. lxi-lxv). In a different vein, Law argues that the *Dīpavaṃsa* was based on Pāli Aṭṭhakathā material rather than any Sinhala sources, and consequently Mahānāma's *Mahāvaṃsa* was based on two distinct streams of Pāli and Sinhala commentaries (pp. 11-14).

[86] Malalasekera, ed., *Vaṃsatthappakāsinī*, pp. lvi-lix.

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Dīpavaṃsaṭṭhakathā, *Sīmākathā*, *(Mahā-) Cetiyavaṃsaṭṭhakathā*, *Mahābodhivaṃsaṭṭhakathā*, *Sumedhakathā*, and *Sahassavatthaṭṭhakathā* are generally presumed to have been the predecessors and sources of much medieval Sri Lankan literature. According to Malalasekera, these works developed out of the oldest strata of Sinhala commentaries, as material dealing with particularly important subjects was eventually compiled into separate chronicles dealing with the Bodhi Tree, the *thūpa*s, and the career of King Duṭṭhagāmiṇī.[87] Therefore, the medieval Buddhist histories appear to have gradually taken shape in a process of elaboration and translation back and forth between Pāli and Sinhala, before finally assuming the largely fixed forms of the texts that survive today.

These short accounts of the Pāli Canon and its commentaries provide a brief orientation to the textual antecedents of the *vaṃsakathā* as well as much of the subsequent Theravāda Buddhist literature in Sri Lanka. The complex interrelationship of canonical and commentarial literature illustrates how the production of the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s entailed the constant choices of authors and scribes in correcting, emending, elaborating, and editing their texts with respect to other sources and manuscript versions of the same text.[88] The corresponding literary practices of compilation and translation may be understood to have had a long history in the production of Sri Lankan Buddhist

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87 Malalasekera, ed., *Vaṃsatthappakāsinī*, p. lx.

88 A similar statement has already been made with reference to medieval Castilian manuscripts by Dagenais in *The Ethics of Reading in Manuscript Culture*. "Manuscript culture," according to Dagenais, "takes up its physical residence in that same world of variation, imprecision, and error. This residence necessarily implies the constant choosing between right and wrong meanings, senses and actions, in shifting and undefined contexts" (p. 16).

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literature. Moreover, they appear to constitute the two primary modes in which texts like the *Thūpavaṃsa*s were composed and transmitted to recall Buddhist history. For instance, in a few of the opening verses to the *Samantapāsādikā*, Buddhaghosa illustrates one way in which the ancient coexistence and commingling of Pāli and Sinhala material could be used to construct a coherent vision of a text out of a plurality of often incoherent textual sources:

> The Dhamma and the Vinaya was recited by the Buddha, and likewise it was learned by his [monastic] "sons." Since formerly commentaries were composed by them without disregarding their wisdom,
>
> Therefore, avoiding the careless writing that was composed in the commentaries, everything here is a measure [of authority] for the pandits who have reverence toward the scholastic disciplines.
>
> And so, forsaking the other language [of Sinhala] and condensing detailed explications, not leaving out any definitive statements, and not deviating from anything that proceeds from the textual tradition,
>
> Since this will be a description that illuminates the meaning of the words of those versed in the discourses in conformity to the Suttas, therefore, it ought to be learned carefully.[89]

The quote above presents an uncomplicated vision of compiling and editing source materials in Pāli and Sinhala to produce a work that is claimed to resemble what has been handed down and to improve upon it by eliminating scribal errors and superfluous material. It appears that while Buddhaghosa may have made use of the Sinhala *aṭṭhakathā*, his finished product is not quite a

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89 *Sp* 137: *Buddhena dhammo vinayo ca vutto/ yo tassa puttehi tatheva ñāto,*
so yehi tesaṃ matim accajantā/ yasmā pure aṭṭhakathā akaṃsu,...

Tasmā hi yaṃ aṭṭhakathāsu vuttaṃ/ taṃ vajjayitvāna pamādalekhaṃ,
sabbaṃ pi sikkhāsu sagāravānaṃ/ yasmā pamāṇaṃ idha paṇḍitānaṃ.

Tato ca bhāsantaram eva hitvā/ vitthāramaggañ ca samāsayitvā,
vinicchayaṃ sabbam aseyativā/ tantikkamaṃ kañci avokkamitvā,

Suttantikānaṃ vacanānam atthaṃ/ suttānurūpaṃ paridīpayantī,
yasmā ayaṃ hessati vaṇṇanā pi/ sakkacca tasmā anusikkhitabbā ti.

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"translation" in the modern sense of rendering a single, bounded text from one language into another. His practices of translating, compiling, editing, and composing are largely blurred together, as he consistently refrains from citing when and to what extent he uses another source. This detail is very relevant for us, as it shows that the two primary modes of adapting material from other works—that is, compilation and translation—were not always clearly distinguished in the production of Buddhist literature in Sri Lanka.

The fact that *vaṃsa*s have drawn on other texts, both in Pāli and Sinhala, profoundly affects any discussion of textual production with respect to the narratives of Buddhist chronicles. Like the above quote from Buddhaghosa shows, the issues sourrounding the nature and identity of a given text are complicated but often deemed crucial enough to warrant acknowledgement in the preface to the work in question. Many of the *vaṃsa*s also explicitly describe their relation to another work or works used as source material. Such is the case with the Pāli *Thūpavaṃsa*, in which the third and fourth of its introductory verses read:

> Although composed formerly by ancient monastics for the sake of the people of Sīhaḷa, because it was prepared in the Sīhaḷa language, the welfare of all people was not fully achieved.
>
> And since the *Thūpavaṃsa* that was composed in the Māgadha [or Pāli] dialect is confused by mistakes in style and word, and since there is much to be said that has not been said, I will therefore recite this chronicle again.[90]

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90 *Thūp* 147: *Kiñcāpi so yatijanena purātenaʃ atthāya sīhaḷajanassa kato purā piʃ/ vākkena sīhaḷabhavenʼ abhisaṅkhaṭattāʃ atthaṃ na sādhayati sabbajanassa sammāʃ/ yasmā ca māgadhanīruttikato pi thūpa-/ vaṃso viruddhanayasaddasamākulo soʃ/ vattabbam eva ca bahuṃ pi yato na vuttaṃʃ tasmā ahaṃ puna pi vaṃsam imaṃ vadāmi.*

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The above verses illustrate a formal intent to revise the historical narratives surrounding the Mahāthūpa relic shrine in the city of Anurādhapura in Sri Lanka. Yet apart from the fact that they refer to existing versions composed in both Pāli and Sinhala languages, those lines also appear to acknowledge a reliance upon additional source material to fill in the parts that remain to be said. In other words, Vācissara Thera—the presumed author of those verses—signals his willingness to compile material from other sources in order to compose a more complete narrative in a cosmopolitan language. The Sinhala version, we are told, is inadequate for audiences in the wider Buddhist world, so the monk has undertaken a new version of an older Pāli work to reach other monks and lay acholars who are not Sinhala-speakers but are proficient in the language of the Pāli Canon.[91] Furthermore, as we shall see below, this goal lies behind Vācissara Thera's apparent decision to compile narrative sections from other Pāli texts instead of simply retranslating the Sinhala text.

To complicate matters more, the extant *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* does not refer to itself as either a translation or a revision. Its relation to its sources or other texts is largely left unstated, with the exception of a few instances where it includes the name of another text in its narrative. The author's identity is not mentioned until the colophon at the end of the text, where it is written that, "The Account of the *Thūpavaṃsa*, which was compiled by Parākrama Paṇḍita, the Wheel-Turner in All the Branches of Learning, having been recited, is

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[91] We should note that such a motivation was hardly far-fetched, as there is evidence that the Pāli *Thūpavaṃsa* travelled to Burma and was rewritten in Burmese script in about the fifteenth century. I wish to acknowledge and thank Patrick Pranke for supplying me with this information and material.

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finished."[92] The words, "*sakala vidyācakravarti*" appear to refer to an official title given to a scholar named Parākrama Paṇḍita.[93] Since there is no mention of a king who formally requested that this work be composed, it is difficult to state definitively whether or not he was a court official. His lay status, however, is confirmed by the fact that the name Parākrama Paṇḍita is mentioned in the fourteenth-century *Nikāya Saṅgrahaya*, wherein the author lists a number of lay scholars (Sinh: *gṛhasthapaṇḍita*) who have composed various works on the Buddha's Dharma.[94] Nonetheless, the manner in which Parākrama Paṇḍita composed this work is not clearly suggested and, as such, it must be inferred from the narrative itself.

If, as I have claimed, the relationships of the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s to their respective sources offers some hints as to how Buddhist histories were composed and envisioned to operate in the world, it is also necessary to consider the *Thūpavaṃsa*s in relation to each other. Again, given the often scant information about the authors and dates of Sri Lankan Buddhist texts, we are unable to say precisely when each of the extant texts were composed. In the preface to his 1889 edition of the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa*, the Ven. Välivițiyē Dhammaratana maintains that Parākrama Paṇḍita was the nephew of Parākramabāhu I (1153-1186), and thus his text forms the basis

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92 *SThūp* 196: *Sakalavidyā cakravarti parākrama paṇḍitayan visin karana lada thūpavaṃsa kathāva kiyā nimavana ladī.*

93 Balagalle Wimalabuddhi Thera, ed., *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* (Colombo: Anula Press, 1966), p. xxviii.

94 *Nik* 22.

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upon which Vācissara composed the Pāli *Thūpavaṃsa*.[95] There are, however, better reasons to take Vācissara's Pāli version as preexisting Parākrama Paṇḍita's Sinhala text. In a notable study of the *vaṃsakathā* of Sri Lanka, Wilhelm Geiger repeats D. M. de Z. Wickremasinghe's objections that there is no evidence that the nephew who became King Vijayabāhu was previously called Parākrama and that the language of the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* resembles more closely that which is found in thirteenth and fourteenth-century texts rather than twelfth-century works such as Guruḷugōmī's *Amāvatura*.[96] Basing their conclusions upon similar arguments, Geiger and N. A. Jayawickrama both ascribe the Pāli *Thūpavaṃsa* to sometime around the middle of the thirteenth century and suggest that the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* was written in the latter half of that century.[97]

Still, it is telling that scholars have had difficulty in determining the order of composition between the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s. It is true, as Geiger notes, that the Sinhala version often paraphrases quotes found in the Pāli version, and in general we can state that the Sinhala text contains nearly everything found in the Pāli *Thūpavaṃsa* and more.[98] Yet the two *Thūpavaṃsa*s differ substantially in narrative content even though they both contain essentially the same plot. The apparent freedom with which ancient

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95 See N.A. Jayawickrama, ed. and trans., *The Chronicle of the Thūpa and the Thūpavaṃsa: Being a Translation and Edition of Vācissarathera's Thūpavaṃsa* (London: Pali Text Society, 1971), pp. xv-xvi.

96 Wilhelm Geiger, *The Dīpavaṃsa and Mahāvaṃsa*, p. 84. Cf. Jayawickrama, *The Chronicle of the Thūpa and the Thūpavaṃsa*, p. xvi.

97 Geiger, *The Dīpavaṃsa and Mahāvaṃsa*, p. 85; Jayawickrama, *The Chronicle of the Thūpa and the Thūpavaṃsa*, pp. xviii, xxiv. Note, however, that Jayawickrama is less confident about dating the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* between 1250 and 1260 than Geiger.

98 See the first footnote in Geiger, *The Dīpavaṃsa and Mahāvaṃsa*, p. 85.

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versions of the *Thūpavaṃsa*s were revised and translated in the medieval period suggests a use of sources that was as varied and individual as the manuscripts themselves. Indeed, we would do well to question whether factual accuracy was a guiding principle in the copmosition of Buddhist histories in medieval Sri Lanka. The necessity for a chronicler to stay close to his or her sources, as is typically advocated by modern practitioners of history, appears to have been frequently overlooked by Sri Lankan authors and scribes in the thirteenth century. On the contrary, the descriptions of facts and events in older sources are freely elaborated upon and altered by texts such as the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s.

If we provisionally accept that medieval writers and scribes of Buddhist histories willfully and sometimes even playfully changed significant details found in older sources, what does this practice indicate about the way that historical "facts" were conceived? Indeed, we tend to think that much of the presumed ideological force of history is located in its pretext to present a true picture of the past upon which claims of authority and legitimacy can be forwarded. We have been taught to take "objective" historical accounts as the most accurate and persuasive since it is assumed that they represent the past "as it really was." For example, Geiger was convinced that the *Mahāvaṃsa* was a fairly objective text since it displays an evenhandness in relating that the invading Damiḷa king Eḷāra ruled justly to both friend and foe, and since it generally recalls verifiable facts of history in a sober and reliable manner.[99]

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[99] Geiger, "The Trustworthiness of the Mahāvaṃsa," pp. 211-212. Cf. the arguments in favor of taking the *vaṃsakathā* as "distinctly historical in form" in R. S. Copleston, "The Verification of the Ancient Chronicles and Histories of Ceylon" *Journal of the Ceylon Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* XII, no. 43 (1892): 161-172.

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Geiger's reading reflects to a large degree the expectation that the most reliable histories are "objective" and written from the perspective of the past itself instead of the author's. Roland Barthes has called this presumption a "referential illusion," in that history (that is, the "referent" of the historian's discourse) is presented as if it were telling its own story.[100] In other words, historical narratives typically belie the fiction that they are as real and natural as the events and situations that they contain. One way of accomplishing this, according to Barthes, is to shift the source of the narrative discourse away from the subjective view of the historian and towards the supposedly objective testimony of the past directly.[101] In short, this marks the attempt by the historian to let the facts of history "speak for themselves."

Modern scholars who argue that the *vaṃsakathā* functioned primarily as texts that legitimated the institutions of Buddhist kingship and the monastic system in premodern Sri Lanka often imply that the chronicles were persuasive because they presumed to convey empirical facts about the past. Even if they are distorted by allegedly mythological tales, the argument goes, texts like the *Mahāvaṃsa* and the *Thūpavaṃsa* worked to convince people of their vision for society precisely because they dealt in "facts" that people would accept as paradigmatic and true.[102] Scholarship on the Buddhist histories of Sri Lanka

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[100] Roland Barthes, "The Discourse of History," in *Comparative Criticism*, vol. 3, edited by E. S. Shaffer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 11.

[101] Barthes, "The Discourse of History," pp. 9-11. For a critical assessment of the pretension that studying the past for its "own sake" is an objective endeavor rather than a bourgeois attempt to maintain the status quo, See Keith Jenkins, *On "What is History?"*, pp. 8-9, 21-25.

[102] Thus, for example, Ling can argue that the story of King Duṭṭhagāmaṇī effected "long-term political results" in as much as it contributed to the growth of Sinhalese nationalism and the belief in an inseparable connection between national identity and the Buddhist religion. See his "Kingship and Nationalism in Pali Buddhism," pp. 66-67.

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has therefore generally not progressed beyond the idea that the *vaṃsa*s were read in a rather monolithic way as allegedly factual acounts that supported the claims to authority of kings and monks in society. More specifically, one can then assume that the *vaṃsa*s presented a model for a political system and a social order in which the Sangha and the State mutually legitimate their roles as the religious and temporal authorities in Sri Lanka.[103] Alternatively, the *vaṃsa*s may be seen to reflect the particular interests of the Mahāvihāra monastery, legitimating their orthodox position and historical primacy against the competing Abhayagiri and Jetavana monasteries in ancient Sri Lanka.[104] Still other scholars argue that the central theme of the *vaṃsa*s was to promote a vision of Laṅkā as the "island of the Dhamma" (*dhammadīpa*), wherein Buddhism is portrayed to have been destined to have a privileged place in the island.[105]

Interpretations of the *vaṃsakathā* that argue that texts like the *Thūpavaṃsa*s functioned as propaganda to legitimate particular political and social realities risk imposing a peculiarly modern way of reading history upon

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[103] See, for example, Bardwell L. Smith, "Kingship, The Sangha, and the Process of Legitimation in Anurādhapura Ceylon: An Interpretive Essay," in *Religion and Legitimation of Power in Sri Lanka*, ed. Bardwell L. Smith (Chambersburg, PA: Anima Books, 1978), pp. 73-77. Sheldon Pollock, for his part, has argued against such theories in conjunction with his study of the formation of a premodern Sanskrit cosmopolitan culture. He maintains that legitimation theory and its logic of instrumental reason is inadequate for understanding the genesis and social force of a trans-local Sanskrit literary culture. According to him, a legitimation theory that attributes the use of Sanskrit literature to attempts by elites to secure consent is anachronistic and a mere assumption since it in fact depends upon a conceptual apparatus inherited from modernity. See Pollack, "The Cosmopolitan Vernacular" *The Journal of Asian Studies* 57, no. 1 (Feb. 1998), pp. 12-13.

[104] See, for example, Sirima Kiribamune, "The Mahāvaṁsa: A Study of the Ancient Historiography of Sri Lanka," in *Senarat Paranavitana Commemoration Volume*, ed. L. Prematilleke, et al. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1978), pp. 133-134.

[105] See, for example, L. S. Perera, "The Pali Chronicle of Ceylon," in *Historians of India, Pakistan and Ceylon*, ed. C. H. Philips (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), pp. 33, 40.

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the past. While we may read and evaluate history as a narrative aspiring to be a realistic account of the past, there is ample evidence in the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s that Buddhist histories incorporated the forms and sensibilities of literature to transform present realities and not simply to legitimate them in their current state. The *Thūpavaṃsa*s do borrow heavily from older sources in producing their narrative accounts of the past, but at the same time they exhibit a willingness to emend and change previous accounts according to criteria such as style and effect rather than just truth or accuracy. Indeed, the focus on the chronicles as tools of legitimation for the power and position of the Buddhist Sangha in Sri Lanka limits us unnecessarily to viewing history-writing only or primarily as an ideological practice to define truth and establish a desired socio-political order.[106] To assume that in premodern Sri Lanka the *Thūpavaṃsa*s were read primarily as repositories of facts that would make one model of society more acceptable than another is to privilege unduly the content of Buddhist history over its literary forms.

An example may be helpful to demonstrate that the narratives of Buddhist history need not be read as an effort to gather and manipulate facts for

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106 A closer reading of the *vaṃsa*s suggests that the interpretation of the chronicles as devices to legitimate the preeminent position of Buddhism in the island and the role of monks to define orthodoxy and participate in the affairs of the State may be an example of what Umberto Eco has called "ideological overcoding." By this, Eco means that a reader can eclipse the message encoded in the structure of a text as written by an author with his or her own ideological subcodes which are presumed to underlie the text, even if they are not explicitly shown. In *The Role of the Reader: Explorations in the Semiotics of Texts* (Bloomingon: Indiana University Press, 1979), Eco argues that this reading practice can either help one to discover or to obscure the ideological structures of the text itself, and when the latter case occurs, "even the most closed texts are surgically 'opened': fiction is transformed into document and the innocence of fancy is translated into the disturbing evidence of a philosophical statement" (p. 22). Eco is, of course, not making a reactionary defense for the possibility of non-ideological discourse. Instead, he is drawing attention to the fact that it is possible for a reader to disobey, as it were, the clues dropped and the structure given in a text designed to ensure a specific reading and interpretation.

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the sake of legitimating religious and political ideologies to serve the interests of particular groups. The story of King Duṭṭhagāmaṇī (Sinh: Duṭugāmuṇu), whose combined effort to drive out Tamil invaders and reestablish Buddhism in the island has been a focus for both Buddhist history and its modern interpreters, is often cited as evidence that the *vaṃsas* were written to promote a symbiotic relationship between Sangha and State in ancient Sri Lanka. For instance, one scholar has pointed out that the many contradictions that the story of Duṭṭhagāmaṇī presents—the king's waging of war against the Tamils, his allowance for five hundred monks to accompany him in order to bless his military campaign, his fixing of a relic of the Buddha on his spear, and so on,—are reconciled by the fact that the chroniclers took history as a charter to legitimate a Sinhalese national consciousness and not to replicate the scriptural ideals from the Pāli Canon.[107]

One episode in the story of Duṭṭhagāmiṇī has been a special focus of attention for modern interpreters of the *vaṃsas*, due largely to the starkness of its message and its apparent compromise of basic Buddhist norms concerning nonviolence. After having defeated the Tamils in twenty-eight separate battles to recapture the kingdom of Laṅkā, King Duṭṭhagāmaṇī is depicted as having laid dejectedly upon his royal couch, being unable to sleep due to the thought of having killed so many of his enemies. As the story goes, some *arahants* who come to know of his thoughts through their psychic power of telepathy send eight from among them to go and console the king in his time of distress.

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[107] Alice Greenwald, "The Relic on the Spear: Historiography and the Saga of Duṭṭhagāmaṇī," in *Religion and Legitimation of Power in Sri Lanka*, ed. Bardwell L. Smith (Chambersburg, PA: Anima Books, 1978), pp. 17-20.

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Commentators frequently cite the following conversation between the king and the *arahants* from the *Mahāvaṃsa* as evidence of how the chronicles function primarily as texts to authorize an ideology of Buddhist statehood:

> 'How then, Reverends, will there be comfort for me, when the destruction of a great army numbering an *akkhohiṇī* was caused by me?,' [said the king].
>
> 'There is no obstacle to the path of heaven for you by this action, in this case only one and a half men were killed, O' Lord of Men.
>
> One had been established in the Refuges, and the other in the Five Precepts. The remaining ones were heretics and immoral, and understood to be like beasts.
>
> But you will cause the Dispensation of the Buddha to shine in many ways, therefore dispel the perplexity in your mind, O' Ruler of Men.'[108]

The question thus becomes how to interpret this episode wherein some highly attained monks in a religion that espouses non-violence can excuse the killing of huge numbers of persons by comparing it to the slaughter of animals. Of course it is possible to view this story as symptomatic of a broader motive in the "*Heilsgeschichte*" of Sri Lankan historiography to affirm and legitimate a Sinhalese religio-national consciousness.[109] Yet even if such interpretations resonate with the sentiments of some people today, we would do well to be skeptical of those who read Buddhist history as reflecting a singularly

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[108] *Mhv* XXV. 108-111: *Kathannu bhante assāso mama hessati, yena me akkhohiṇīmahāsenāghāto kārāpito' iti.*

Saggamaggantarāyo ca natthi te tena kammunā, diyaḍḍhamanujā ve 'ttha ghātitā manujādhipa,

saraṇesu ṭhito eko, pañcasīle pi cā 'paro; micchādiṭṭhī ca dussilā sesā pasusamā matā.

jotayissasi ceva tvaṃ bahudhā buddhasāsanaṃ; manovilekhaṃ tasmā tvaṃ vinodaya narissara.

[109] Alice Greenwald, "The Relic on the Spear," p. 30.

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conceived ideology that legitimated broadly defined social and institutional realities.

The view that Buddhist histories functioned collectively to promote a religio-nationalistic charter is undermined by the fact that not every chronicle presents us with the same view of Duṭṭhagāmiṇī's dilemma. Gananath Obeyesekere has singled out this episode from the *Mahāvaṃsa* as a troublesome instance of the ethical dilemma involved in Buddhist kingship. Although he concludes from it that the *Mahāvaṃsa* justifies killing and violence in the name of the religion, he does point out that this story has been treated in different ways in different texts, and that this shows that it was a subject of debate and ethical reflection among later Buddhist authors.[110] Thus, the episode depicting the *arahant*s as consoling the king could be presented differently by authors and scribes of later histories. The same story has been rewritten in the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa*, wherein the king's actions are neither condoned nor justified:

> At that time the king, having venerated the Theras, having seats prepared, seating them, asked, 'What is the reason for [your] coming?' And the Theras, while declaring the reason they came, said, 'Great King! We have come to dispel the doubt that you have thought, that is, perhaps there is an obstacle to both heaven and emancipation because of the eighteen *kalanda*s of Demaḷas [Tamils] which were killed by you.' The king who heard those words said, ' Of course, Reverends, having killed about eighteen *kalanda*s of Demaḷas, much sin has been accumulated by the servant [of the Sangha] who has fought a battle of this magnitude. Kindly resolve this concern, namely, is there or is there not an obstacle to both heaven and emancipation because of this unwholesome *karma*?' And the Theras who heard those words said, 'Great King! An obstacle to both heaven and emancipation will not come to you because of this.' 'Why, Reverends! What is the reason for saying there is no obstacle? When it is said that even killing small

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110 Gananath Obeyesekere, *A Meditation on Conscience* (Colombo: Social Scientists' Association of Sri Lanka, 1988), pp. 19-25.

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> creatures such as male and female ants, nits, and male and female lice there is sin, why do you say that there is no obstacle to both my [rebirth in] heaven and emancipation because of the sin in which I killed these many humans?,' he asked. 'Great King! You are a Great Being [*mahatāṇō*] who has made an aspiration and who has perfections which have been fulfilled throughout one incalculable [world-period] and one hundred-thousand eons. You will become the right-hand disciple of the Fully Awakened Buddha Maitreya, who will become a Buddha in the future. Therefore since there is no abiding in your cycle of rebirths, there is no occasion for sin [to bear fruit],' they said.[111]

The *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* frames the episode quite differently from the way it appears in the *Mahāvaṃsa*. Rather than legitimating a particularly violent expression of kingship, the author of the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* appears to promote an ethical debate of conscience in a manner akin to that which is described by Obeyesekere. Without excusing the slaying of the enemy for the sake of Buddhism, the *arahants* in this version of the story reassure the king that the merit he has accumulated in former births is so powerful that his destined rebirth in heaven and subsequent rebirth as the chief disciple of the

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[111] *SThūp* 141-142: *E vēlehi rajjuruvō terun vahansē vāňda asun panavā vaḍā hiňduvā 'vāḍi kāraṇā kiṁ dā' yi vicāḷaha. Terun vahansēda taman vahansē vāḍi kāraṇā vadāraṇa sēk, 'Maha raja, topa visin mārū aṭaḷos kalandayak demaḷungen svarga mokṣa dekaṭa antarāyek vē dō hō yi yanuven situ sākaya haranaṭa āmha' yi vadāḷa sēka. E bas āsū rajjuruvō 'Esēya, svāmīni, aṭaḷos kalandayak pamaṇa demaḷun marā mē sā yuddhayak karana gāttavun visin bohō pav rāskarana lada, mē akuśala karmayen svargamokṣa dekaṭa bādhā āddō hō nāddō hō yi yana mē sākaya pisiňda vadāla yahapatā' yi kīha. E bas āsū terun vahansē da 'Maha raja, mē nisā topaṭa svarga mokṣa dekaṭa bādhāvak no pāmiṇe' yi vadāla sēka. 'Āyi svāmīni? Bādhā nātāyi vadarannaṭa kāraṇā kiṁ da? Kihiṁbi, kuhuṁbu, leheňḍi, ukuṇu, ikiṇi ā kuḍā satun mārū kala pavā pav ya yi yana kala metek manuṣyayan mārū pavin māgē svarga mokṣa dekaṭa bādhā nātāyi kavara heyin kiyana sēk dā' yi vicāḷēya. 'Maharaja, tepi ekāsaṅkhya kalpalakṣayak muḷullehi pirū pāramitā āti kṛtādhikāra mahatāṇō ya. Anāgatayehi buduvana maitreya samyak sambudurajāṇan vahansēṭa dakuṇat savu vannāhu ya. Esē heyin topagē sasara visīma nāti heyin pāpayaṭa avakāśa nātā' yi vadāḷa sēka.* Cf. the same episode in the Pāli *Thūpavaṃsa*, which reads: "Therefore the king the who had gone to the royal bed on the terrace of the palace, considering his great prosperity, remembered the slaughter of an army numbering an *akkhohiṇi*. Great unhappiness arose for the king who was remembering that. He thought, 'Might there be an obstacle to the path of heaven for me?' Thereupon the *arahants* at Piyaṅgudīpa, ascertaining the king's thought, dispatched eight *arahants* to console him. Having come and announced their arrival, they ascended to the terrace of the palace. The king, venerating the Theras and having them sit in seats, asked the reason for their coming. The Theras, having told the reason for coming, making known to him that there was no obstacle to heaven and release by that deed, departed." See *Thūp* 214 for the Pāli text from which I have translated this passage.

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future Buddha Maitreya are not undone by his acts of war. This episode affirms that the king is akin to a Bodhisattva and that merit can cancel out the effects of unwholesome activity.

The above episode from the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa*, moreover, illustrates that Buddhist history-writing was not merely concerned with describing and representing the past as it was depicted in older and authoritative narratives. Instead, the adaptation of that episode with Duṭṭhagāmaṇī signals that accounts in historical sources could be creatively altered to the extent of even rewriting quotes of what figures in the past allegedly said. As we will see below, the *Mahāvaṃsa* was an oft-cited source for both the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s. Yet it appears that this text functioned to provide one historical frame upon which later authors and scribes could write or rewrite their own accounts of the past as they saw fit. As such, the *Mahāvaṃsa* cannot rightly be seen as representative or paradigmatic of the messages and motivations for all of the Sri Lankan chronicles. The frequent attempts by scholars to discuss the *Mahāvaṃsa* as emblematic of all Sri Lanka's Buddhist histories are thus problematic since the ideological unity and coherence assumed to exist among the *vaṃsakathā* are not always in evidence.

Claims that the *vaṃsakathā* work collectively to instigate and legitimize violence or promote a vision of a Buddhist state modelled after the idealized textual notion of the "*dhammadīpa*" thus become unsustainable when one discovers the variety of interpretations, elaborations, and omissions found in one historical narrative to the next.[112] To that end, it is particularly significant

[112] The mistaken tendency to use the *Mahāvaṃsa* to discuss a common set of identical views and traditions in Buddhist history-writing in general appears to be the norm among

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that the so-called "Vijaya myth," detailing the legendary arrival of the Sinhala people upon Laṅkā and the Buddha's explicit intention that the island should thereafter serve as the special home of the Dharma, is altogether absent in the narratives of the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s.[113] The sources of the *Thūpavaṃsa*s were at times followed scrupulously and elsewhere radically revised to suit the apparent interests of their authors and/or scribes. Indeed, the production of Buddhist histories is apparently a matter complicated enough to shed doubt on their presumed purpose for transmitting a coherent vision of the past that would, in turn, legitimate a politicized form of Buddhism.

I.2 COMPOSING PĀLI BUDDHIST HISTORIES

Given the sometimes divergent readings of the past among the *vaṃsakathā*, it would seem that arguments made for the intentions and uses of Buddhist history must necessarily consider the manners in which they were composed. A closer examination of the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s will

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modern scholars. Thus, for example, I contest such unqualified statements as this one made by Gananath Obeyesekere: "Buddhist history is either the instigator or legitimator of violence." See his "Buddhism, Nationhood, and Cultural Identity: A Question of Fundamentals," in *Fundamentalisms Comprehended*, ed. Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 235. Stanley Tambiah, on the other hand, appears to comes closer to the view of this dissertation when notes that we "should be open to the possibility of multiple discourses and multiple intentionalities operating at different levels" in the chronicles. See Tambiah, *Buddhism Betrayed?*, p. 137. Yet it should be noted that Tambiah addresses this comment specifically to those persons who read the chronicles as evidence for a Sinhala Buddhist identity existing in ancient times. I would contend, however, that his statement applies equally well to people such as himself who tend to read the chronicles only as tools for legitimating the idea of Sinhala nationalism.

[113] The story of Vijaya is found in *Mhv* VII. G. C. Mendis argues that this myth is the literary work of monks who composed the story based on *Jātaka* material during the first few centuries of the Common Era. See "The Vijaya Legend," Chpt. 4 in his *The Pāli Chronicles of Sri Lanka*, pp. 56-85. Gananath Obeyesekere discusses the relevance of the Vijaya story to modern Sinhala identity and politics in his "Religious Symbolism and Political Change in Ceylon" in *The Two Wheels of Dhamma: Essays on the Theravada Tradition in India and Ceylon*, ed. Bardwell L. Smith (Chambersburg, PA: American Academy of Religion, 1972): 58-78.

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show that the production of histories entailed practices of selectively borrowing and adapting material in the service of fashioning new narratives out of older sources. Again, the lives of such texts in their medieval manuscript forms were varied and subject to constant revision by the activity of scribes copying a text by hand in a effort to both preserve and perfect it. The degree to which the *Thūpavaṃsa*s copied and changed their sources is impossible to distinguish since practically all of the texts in existence at that time are lost to us. Yet we can still note that authors such as Vācissara Thera employed practices of compiling and copying, editing and elaborating when producing Pāli chronicles. We will see in the final section of this chapter that composing the *Thūpavaṃsa* in Sinhala entailed slightly different methods and arrived at some distinctive results. I will focus here, however, on the style of composition found in the Pāli *Thūpavaṃsa* to highlight the values and intentions evident in its production.

In her illuminating study of premodern Islamicate historiography, Marilyn Robinson Waldman lays out an argument for reading historical narratives as texts that display certain values and concerns contemporary with their production. While outlining the determinative roles that various contextual and literary influences played in the premodern production of such narratives, she suggests that it would be helpful to try and reconcile the questionable split made by scholars between the categories of literature and history. Islamicate historical narratives, according to her, do not possess a special kind of language nor do they contain especially accurate descriptions of and relevance to things outside themselves that would naturally lead us to classify them according to

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principles that are distinct from literature.[114] Put simply, Muslim authors of historical works were basically writers of texts who adhered, more or less, to literary conventions associated with history-writing as well as other genres. Thus, acts that to us would constitute plagiarism—such as the practice of lifting whole sections from others' works—might not be considered so in a tradition were well-known passages did not require formal acknowledgement and certain traditional works were considered to be the common possession of all.[115]

A similar point could be made with regard to Sri Lanka's Buddhist histories, due to their propensity towards quoting, copying, and alluding to other texts in the midst of their narratives. Such examples of "intertextuality" in the production of Buddhist history do not make these texts unique since, indeed, the imitation and copying of other narratives was an exceedingly common method of composing Buddhist texts in Sri Lanka.[116] Yet the manner in which compiling practices were employed in the production of a text may also signify something of the way it was designed to be encountered by a reader or listener. Some compilers are quite "overt" in their practices of collecting material from other sources and presenting it under the cover of one's own work.[117] We might say, then, that a high degree of overtness in compilation is

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114 Marilyn Robinson Waldman, *Toward a Theory of Historical Narrative: A Case Study in Perso-Islamicate Historiography* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1980), pp. 17-18.

115 Waldman, *Toward a Theory of Historical Narrative*, p. 15.

116 Charles Hallisey "*Nibbānasutta*: An Allegedly Non-Canonical Sutta on Nibbāna as a Great City," *Journal of the Pali Text Society* 18 (1993), p. 104.

117 My use of the terms "overt" and "covert" with reference to the relative presence or absence of a compiler who acknowledges the constructed nature of a work drawing explicitly on other sources is based largely on the same distinction that Seymour Chatman makes with regard to "overt" and "covert narrators" in his *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1978).

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marked by the conspicuous presence of quoted material culled from other sources and explicitly identified as such. This practice results in a highly constructed narrative, wherein commentary and summaries are supplied by the narrator, and the act of compiling is held to be instrumental to the value or purpose of the text. In other words, there is an implicit reason for the audience to know that a given verse was taken from a particular text, and this knowledge is worthwhile in itself, whether it points to another source to be consulted or it educates the reader about the content of other texts. Yet, in such cases, one often finds that the text proceeds not according to a temporal sequence marked by the passing of time, but rather it proceeds along a spatial sequence often found near the beginning of a work in the form of a summary (P: *saṅkhepa*) or list (P: *mātikā*) of its contents. Such a text would thus read more like a textbook or a manual than an historical work.

A good example of that mode of composition is found in a Pāli work called *Upāsakajanālaṅkāra*, which was written in the twelfth century C.E. by the Mahāthera Ānanda in Sri Lanka. The material collected for this work comes from a wide variety of canonical and non-canonical Pāli sources, most of which have been identified by Ven. H. Saddhatissa in his critical edition of the text.[118] The quotations have been inserted within nine chapters, of which eight are listed sequentially (and italicized here) in a summary of its contents:

> Thus, by the male and female lay devotees who have gone to the Refuges [*saraṇa*], being established in morality [*sīla*], purifying it by the acceptance of suitable ascetic practices [*dhutaṅga*], forsaking the five immoral trades, and who by making a livelihood [*jīvika*] righteously and peacefully, attaining a condition such as a lotus-like lay-disciple, and

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118 H. Saddhatissa, *Upāsakajanālaṅkāra: A Critical Edition and Study*, (London: Pali Text Society, 1965), pp. 115-122.

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> who by fulfilling the ten kinds of meritorious actions [*dasapuññakiriyavatthu*] every day, and renouncing the factors that cause obstacles [*antarāyakaradhamma*], worldly and world-transcending felicities [*lokiya-lokuttarasampattiyo*] are to be accomplished. This herein is a summary. And now it is to be known in detail thus . . .[119]

The compiler, Ven. Ānanda, has skillfully grouped the topics to be discussed in an order resembling the moral and spiritual development imagined to occur within pious devotees. Yet the subject of the text could conceivably be any male or female Buddhist layperson. The summary thus represents a potential chronology, but not a past one. One might then rightly expect the text to collect various discourses (*suttas*) and verses (*gāthā*) scattered throughout older sources that function to encourage certain religious practices and conduct. While many of the quoted prose and verse passages in the *Upāsakajanālaṅkāra* are not specifically identified for their sources, the author has nevertheless frequently set apart the material he adopted from other sources by techniques such as retaining the verse form of certain quotations and introducing a quote with a phrase such as, "Likewise it was said" (*yathāha*) to identify material lifted from other texts.

The position that the Ven. Ānanda conceived of his text as a compilation is, however, most strongly supported in a single verse found among the opening lines of his work. "Taking the essence from within the *suttas*, [the text] is now related without confusion—just as those who are skilled create an

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119 *Upās* 174: *Evaṃ saraṇagatehi pana upāsakopāsikajanehi sīle patiṭṭhāya patirūpadhutaṅgasamādānena taṁ parisodhetvā pañcavaṇijjā pahāya dhammena samena jīvikaṃ kappayantehi upāsakapadumādhibhāvaṃ patvā dine dine dasa puññakiriyavatthūni pūrentehi antarāyakaradhamme pahāya lokiyalokuttarasampattiyo sādhetabbā ti ayaṃ ettha saṅkhepo. Vitthāro pana evaṃ veditabbo.*

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excellent crown with gems originating from various mines."[120] This metaphor for literary production, comparing the selection of various passages from Buddhist literature to the practice of collecting gems, also compares the text to a crown and the author to a master artisan. The image here powerfully suggests that a "text" in medieval Sri Lanka could be conceived as the sum of selections from other texts, and that an "author" need not compose a wholly original work. Instead, it is enough to collect already-existing "gems," or instructive passages from other texts. Furthermore, the colophon to that text states, "The *Upāsakajanālaṅkāra*, composed by the Venerable Mahathera Ānanda, the Sinhala Teacher, is finished."[121] The use of the past participle "*viracito*" here is significant since it refers to an act of composing that more specifically connotes putting together or arranging a text from already existing pieces.[122]

The thirteenth-century *Sārasaṅgaha* shares a similar style of overt compilation with the *Upāsajanālaṅkāra* that nicely illustrates how a Sri Lankan Buddhist text could be produced, while still recognizing its dependence on the narratives of other works. The author, a monk named Siddhattha, declares at the outset, "I will present the excellent *Sārasaṅgaha* in an abridged form, bringing together various methods that cause happiness to the ear."[123]

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[120] *Upās* 123: *Ādāya suttantarato pi sāraṃ*
anākulaṃ 'dāni kathīyate so
maṇihi nekākarasambhavehi
chekā hi kubbanti kirīṭaseṭṭhaṃ.

[121] *Upās* 358: *Iti sīhalācariyabhadantānandamahātheraviracito Upāsakajanālaṅkāro niṭṭhito.* Saddhatissa suggests that "*sīhalācariya*" is an epithet which was used to designate the monk's home country when he composed the work during a stay in India (p. 36).

[122] The Pāli word "*viracita*" has been variously defined as "put together, composed, made" in PED 635.

[123] *Ss* 1: *Dassayissaṃ samāsena pavaraṃ sārasaṅgahaṃ,*
samāharitvā vividhaṃ nayaṃ sotasukhāvahan ti.

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Thereafter the compilation of Pāli materials are organized sequentially following a list of topics given in a random order from the aspiration of Buddhas to the reappearance of the world, with sections on subjects such as the benefit of sweeping, an analysis of sleep, and a description of foods in between. In such a text, the materials are quite often presented in a particularly overt manner, as the following introduction from the section on shrines (*cetiya*) illustrates:

> As for 'an explication of the shrines for Omniscient Ones and Universal Monarchs,' this herein is the explication. 'They receive two felicities [*sampattiyo*] from the birth of a Universal Monarch, but they receive three felicities from the birth of Buddhas. Tending to the shrine of a Universal Monarch, they receive two felicities. Tending to the shrine of Buddhas, they receive three felicities,' thus it was said in the commentary on the dyads in *Aṅguttara Nikāya.*[124]

When we encounter this portion of the text we may infer that the narrator has collected a quotation from a commentarial text which deals with one aspect of knowledge and practice towards funerary shrines. He is in fact not commenting upon the particular canonical passage found in the "dyads" section of *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, but rather he simply supplies a quote from the *aṭṭhakathā* to give the reader his source for some information relating to the veneration of relic shrines. Subsequent quotes are culled from such sources as the sub-commentary (P: *ṭīkā*) to the Vinaya Piṭaka and the Mahaparinibbāṇa Sutta, and are likewise identified therein.

At the end of the *Sārasaṅgaha*, our author again provides a hint as to how he conceived of the literary production of his text. In the concluding verses, the relationship between the author and his work is made clear, enabling

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124 *Ss* 32: *Sambuddha cakkavattīnaṃ cetiyānaṃ nidassananti. Etthāyaṃ vibhāvanā. Cakkavattino uppattiyā dve sampattiyo labhanti. Buddhānaṃ uppattiyā tissopi sampattiyo labhanti. Cakkavattino cetiyaṃ jaggitvā dve sampattiyo labhanti. Buddhānaṃ cetiyaṃ jaggitvā tissopi sampattiyo labhantī 'ti aṅguttaradukavaṇṇanāya vuttaṃ.*

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us to view another representation of the "collect and present" method of composing Buddhist literature: "This beautiful *Sārasaṅgaha* has been written by that Thera named Siddhattha, wise and of pure conduct, and who is the preeminent student of the Thera named Buddhappiya, the lord of the Dakkhiṇa monastery and a bearer of the Three Piṭakas."[125] What is significant about this verse is that in the context of extolling himself as the author of the text, he uses the past participle "*likhita*," which conveys the mechanical sense of "written" as in inscribed or scratched.[126] Far from suggesting that the authorship of this text entailed an original and creative composition, that single word implies that the author simply copied down the material which makes up his text. In this and other ways, texts such as *Upāsakajanālaṅkāra* and *Sārasaṅgaha* are clearly portrayed as works that were copied and compiled from various other sources. The sequence of their narratives is based on thematic lists constructed by their authors, and in which there lacks a clear narrative framework to unite the contents of their texts. Thus, we might posit that more overtly compiled texts are those that have been constructed out of various other narratives, collected together, and presented in order to function didactively to edify an audience, but not to tell a story per se.[127]

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125 *Ss* 256: *Dakkhiṇārāmapatino piṭakattayadhārino,*
buddhappiyavhatherassa yo sissānantimo yati.
Tena siddhatthanāmena dhīmatā sucivuttinā,
therena likhito eso vicitto sārasaṅgaho.

126 As the past participle of the verb *likhati*, "*likhita*" often connotes the sense of something "carved, cut, worked" or "written, inscribed," *PED* 584. I would like to thank Charles Hallisey for drawing my attention to the language used in the colophon of this text.

127 To these relatively fixed collections we should add the *ad hoc* anthologies of various *suttas*, discourses, and stories that have been variously copied and bound together with other miscellaneous texts to form new works.

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In contrast, compilations may be much more "covert," however, in collecting and presenting the materials taken from other sources. Intertextuality in these cases is often less obviously noticed since the borrowed material can be subsumed within a broader narrative that runs throughout the text. As a result the material that is collected from other texts is not always signalled, much less cited. Rather the structure of covert types of compilations inserts such content into the discursive framework of a story, or the "plot," so that the collected material is effectively tansformed into a new text under a new identity. Vācissara's Pāli *Thūpavaṃsa* displays this kind of compilation practice in as much as the material it lifts out from other texts is seamlessly incorporated into its own narrative. Geiger, for one, has noted that the author of the Pāli *Thūpavaṃsa* appears to have made use of *Jātaka-nidānakathā*, *Samantapāsādikā*, *Buddhavaṃsa*, *Mahāvaṃsa*, and the *Vaṃsatthappakāsinī* to compile material for his thirteenth-century narrative.[128] In fact, the considerable amount of material copied by the *Thūpavaṃsa* from other works besides any older versions of the "Chronicle of the Thūpa" strongly suggests that Vācissara's text represents the collect and present mode of textual production, even though he usually obscures this fact by rarely drawing attention to the sources of several prose descriptions found in his text.

What does this compositional style of compiling Buddhist histories from various Pāli sources signify? Geiger, who studied and wrote upon the *vaṃsakathā* as extensively as any scholar, concludes that such findings are indicative of a coherent and conservative historiographical tradition. Indeed, he

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[128] Geiger, *The Dīpavaṃsa and Mahāvaṃsa*, pp. 85, 104.

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maintains that the ancient Sinhala *aṭṭhakathā* form the last original works of Buddhist history, as the *Samantapasādikā*, *Nidānakathā*, *Dīpavaṃsa*, and *Mahāvaṃsa* are judged to depend upon the older commentaries and are also said to serve as the principal authorities for the framework and contents of later histories.[129] Bimala Churn Law has likewise noted the tendency of medieval chronicles to borrow freely from their sources. For instance, the so-called "derivative" nature of the *Thūpavaṃsa* led Law to describe the text as "lacking in originality" and as "one of the products of the decadent period of Pāli literature in Ceylon."[130] He further suggests that the *Thūpavaṃsa* is typical of the late medieval Pāli works which are characterized by, in his opinion, "the hard nut of the stereotyped and highly conventional prose of scholastic writings."[131] Whether one adopts the neutral position of Geiger or the critical assessment of Law, either interpretation is apt to overlook the fact that a text like the *Thūpavaṃsa* combines repetition with revision, enabling its narrative to evoke new visions and sentiments out of familiar stories and imagery.

While acknowledging the presence of older Sinhala versions of the *Thūpavaṃsa*, Vācissara Thera does not explicitly claim that his work is a translation of any one of these sources. According to Malalasekera, one may conclude that the ancient Sinhala commentary referred to as the *Cetiyavaṃsaṭṭhakathā* was one of the sources that is acknowledged in the *Thūpavaṃsa*.[132] Vācissara Thera, however, has chosen to present his text as a

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129 Geiger, *The Dīpavaṃsa and Mahāvaṃsa*, p. 104.

130 Bimala Churn Law, trans., *The Legend of the Topes (Thūpavaṃsa)*, (1945; reprint, New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1986), p. vi.

131 Law, *The Legend of the Topes*, p. vi.

132 Malalasekera, ed., *Vaṃsatthappakāsinī*, p. lxix.

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new version of the *Thūpavaṃsa*, and thus is strictly speaking neither a commentary nor a translation of just an older Sinhala version.[133] In the course of adding material that he evidently felt "should be said," the author (and perhaps later scribes) inserted quotations and entire prose sections lifted out of other Pāli works. Significantly, the colophon to the extant *Thūpavaṃsa* reveals that Vācissara Thera describes his own activity of composing this text in the same manner as Ven. Siddhattha in his *Sārasaṅgaha*. Thus Vācissara Thera concludes by stating that "Among whose student monks the Dispensation is well-established, this [*Thūpavaṃsa*] was written [*likhito*] by that Venerable Vācissara Thera."[134] As in *Sārasaṅgaha*, the word "written" connotes the mechanical act of writing rather than a creative act of authoring a new text. It is suggestive of a practice of textual production wherein the "author" collects and copies down existing narrative material to form a single "text" that is actually composite in form.

The compilation of the *Thūpavaṃsa* illustrates that Pāli historical narratives could incoporate both overtly borrowed material such as quotes and covertly copied prose sections that mirror the form of the narrative throughout the text. Unlike the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* which includes relatively few direct quotations, the Pāli version frequently quotes verses from other texts in the midst of its prose narrative. A verse is easily identified as a quotation due in large part to the syntactical differences of its form and by the tendency of the

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133 Note that a similar point has been made by Telwatte Rahula with regard to the elaborations made upon the *Sahassavatthu* by the author of the *Rasavāhinī*. See his "The *Rasavāhinī* and the *Sahassavatthu*: A comparison," *The Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 7, no. 2 (1984), pp. 172-173.

134 *Thūp* 255: *Sāsanaṃ suṭṭhitaṃ yassa antevāsikabhikkhusu,*
tena Vācissarattherapādena likhito ayan ti.

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author to introduce it with some remark about its prior expression. Yet, although Vācissara Thera may signal a quote with words such as: "Therefore it was said" (*tena vuttaṃ*), "Accordingly it was said" (*yathāha*), "At that time" (*tadā*), "Thus" (*evaṃ*), and "And to that end" (*ettāvatā ca*), he normally does not cite his source for a given quotation.[135] Rather, he periodically includes a quoted verse in his narrative for the sake of emphasizing an important point or embellishing his work.

In instances where quotes lend emphasis to the narrative, they regularly appear in the Pāli *Thūpavaṃsa* either to retiterate an account or to highlight a particular event in the narrative. Thus, after listing the many towns where Duṭṭhagāmaṇī defeatd a Damiḷa garrison, the *Thūpavaṃsa* quotes a few verses from the *Mahāvaṃsa* to underscore a miraculous occurence attributed to the piety of the king during his attempts to defeat the invaders:

> At that time: having heard that his own men were destroying his army without recognizing it, the Lord of the Earth thereupon made an act of truth,
>
> 'This effort of mine is not at any time for the pleasure of kingship, but for the establishment of the Dispensation of the Fully Enlightened Buddha, is this my [effort].
>
> By that truth, may the articles taken upon the bodies of my army, become like the color of fire,' and then that occurred in that very way.[136]

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135 See, for example, *Thūp* 156, 165, 211, 216, 254.

136 *Thūp* 211: *Tadā, Ajānitvā sakaṃ senaṃ ghātenti sajanā ti*
sutvāna saccakiriyam akarī tattha bhūpati.

Rajjasukhāya vāyāmo nāyaṃ mama kadā pi ca
sambuddhasāsanass' eva ṭhapanāya ayaṃ mama,

Tena saccena me senākāyopagatabhaṇḍakaṃ
jālavaṇṇaṃ va hotū 'ti, taṃ tath' eva tadā ahu.

Cf. *Mhv* XXV. 16-18, from which the above verses are taken.

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While the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* simply paraphrases the above descriptions in its own words, the Pāli version quotes the *Mahāvaṃsa*'s account directly.[137] Yet this does not signify only the unimaginative borrowing of information found elsewhere. This instance of intertextuality in the *Thūpavaṃsa* contributes to a deeper layering of material in the text, wherein the narrative is shown to resonate with other Buddhist texts in general. A learned reader or listener would thus be encouraged to reflect upon the identity of this other source and to make connections between the *Thūpavaṃsa* and other texts. At the same time, the author momentarily departs from his prose description to highlight praiseworthy qualities in the king, emphasizing that his virtue and truthfulness allowed him to perform an act of truth (P: *saccakiriya*).[138]

Another method of quotation in the Pāli *Thūpavaṃsa* functions to augment or embellish the literary effects of the narrative. These too often go uncited, but they differ from the above example in the sense that they often extend beyond the immediate narrative frame to make a statement that is directly relevant to a contemporary audience. This manner of quotation is found especially at the end of sections of the text where a verse often has the effect of a benediction, as in the following lines which conclude the section describing the lavish offerings made to the Brazen Palace (P: *lohapāsāda*) in Anurādhapura by King Duṭṭhagāmaṇī:

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137 See *SThūp* 134.

138 Cf. *Thūp* 202, where King Asoka also performs an "act of truth" when he resolves that a branch of the Bodhi Tree should separate itself and be established in a golden vessel to be taken to Laṅkā. In this instance too an act of truth confirms the righteousness of the king's intent. On the phenomenon of the "act of truth" more generally in South Asian religion, see W. Norman Brown, "Duty as Truth in Ancient India" *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 116, no. 3 (June 1972): 252-268.

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Thus having assembled the Sangha, pouring the water for the dedication and giving the [Lohapāsāda] mansion to the Sangha, it is said that he bestowed a great alms-offering for seven days like at the festival for the Maricavaṭṭi monastery.

'Leaving aside the priceless objects, that which was given up by the king,who had great generosity, was worth thirty crores.'

'Having given that quantity of wealth which must be abandoned when one departs, the wise thus enjoy a gift of the treasure that accompanies them [in rebirth].'[139]

In this way, the *Thūpavaṃsa* not only introduces a detail to the narrative by depicting the incredible value of the king's offerings, but also makes a general religious statement explaining that it is only merit that can be taken from one life to the next. Imitating the form of the *Mahāvaṃsa*, which concludes each of its chapters with a moral exhortation, the *Thūpvaṃsa* copies the first verse from *Mahāvaṃsa* XXVII. 47. Yet, in a sign of the author's willingness to deviate from his sources, Vācissara Thera alters the second verse substantially from what is found in *Mahāvaṃsa* XXVII. 48.[140] Whether or not this represents Vācissara's own composition or an imitation from another unidentified source cannot be definitively ascertained as of yet. Still, the increased emphasis on merit as a treasure that can be retained after death and taken into the next world

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[139] *Thūp* 218: *Evaṃ saṅghaṃ sannipātetvā dakkhiṇodakaṃ pātetvā saṅghassa pāsādaṃ datvā maricavaṭṭivihāramahe viya sattāhaṃ mahādānam adāsīti.*

Pasādahetu cattāni mahācāgena rājinā
anagghāni ṭhapetvā ahesuṃ tiṃsakoṭiyo

Pahāyagamanīyan taṃ datvāna dhanasañcayaṃ
anugāmidhanaṃ dānaṃ evaṃ kubbanti paṇḍitā.

[140] The verse from the *Mahāvaṃsa* reads, "The very wise realize that the accumulation of wealth is without essence/ and that giving alms is of special worth./ They whose minds are without attachment,/ thus give extensive alms out of the highest welfare for beings." See *Mhv* XXVII. 48: *Nissāre dhananicaye visesasāraṃ/ ye dānaṃ pariganayanti sādhupaññā/ te dānaṃ vipulamapetacittasaṅgā/sattānaṃ hitaparamā dadanti evam ti.*

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does illustrate how the author (or a scribe) of the Pāli *Thūpavaṃsa* occasionally inserts verses to embellish the received narrative with an edifying moral for the sake of the audience. By emending the quote, Vācissara Thera imparts new significance to the narrative, and signals a concern for textual reception that apparently outweighs the concern for the faithful reproduction of material from the *Mahāvaṃsa*.

Elsewhere, the infrequent use of direct citations in the Pāli *Thūpavaṃsa* supply us with additional evidence of how intertextuality is employed for the sake of crafting layers of meaning and interpretive frames within the narrative. By occasionally citing a source in the narrative, the author or scribe draws attention to a nexus of meaning that is established in the relationships that the text has with other works. Thus, it appears that Vācissara Thera cites a source text in a few instances as a way of introducing material into his narrative that, in turn, serves to enhance the communicative function of his text. For example, the Pāli *Thūpavaṃsa* includes a quotation with a direct citation in the section describing the "psychic powers" (*iddhi*) that contributed to the building of the marvellous relic chamber in the Mahāthūpa:

> Herein realizing that the king has great authority, great power, has fulfilled the perfections, and has made an aspiration, the king's psychic powers are to be understood on account of this. Since having been approached and possessed by the deity Vissakamma by the order of Sakka from the beginning, the gods' psychic powers are to be understood on account of this. The Thera Indagutta who oversaw the work, acted while having the lesser and minor work carried out. And not just that Thera, but also all the Noble Ones entered upon endeavors respectively in the work that had to be done. So it is to be understood that [the work] was done by these three having psychic powers. Indeed, it has been said in the *Mahāvaṃsa*:
>
> > 'The Mahāthera Indagutta, having the Six Higher Knowledges, being very wise, arranged all this here as the overseer of the work.'

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> 'Through the psychic power of the king, the psychic power of the deities, and the psychic power of the Noble Ones, all [these items of worship] were established without obstruction.'[141]

The above excerpt demonstrates how a cited quotation functions to reiterate and thus emphasize a particular message in the narrative of the Pāli *Thūpavaṃsa*. In this instance, the quotation does not introduce any new information that has not already been mentioned by the narrator before. Rather, it functions to promote a manner of approaching the story that allows the audience to accept the apparent fact that innumerable offerings could fit inside the finite dimensions of the relic chamber in the Mahathūpa shrine. As such, rather than simply legitimating its own historical narrative, the reference to the *Mahāvaṃsa* in the *Thūpavaṃsa* works to affirm the marvellous potency of psychic powers more generally, as their effects are similarly demonstrated in more than one text.

Earlier, in the Pāli *Thūpavaṃsa*, the author cites a quotation taken from the *Buddhavaṃsa* that also serves to frame and enhance a person's encounter with the text while, at the same time, showing how the use of source material points to what a particular text was envisioned to accomplish. The ten verses that are quoted relate the instance where the former Buddha Dīpaṅkara predicts that the ascetic Sumedha will one day become a Buddha named Gotama. As

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141 *Thūp* 238: *Ettha ca rājā mahesakkho mahānubhāvo pūritapāramī katābhinīharo 'ti tassa vasena rāj'iddhi veditabbā. Sakkena āṇattena Vissakammunā devaputtena ādito paṭṭhāya āvisitvā katattā tassa vasena dev'iddhi veditabbā. Kammādhiṭṭhāyaka-indaguttathero khuddānukhuddakaṃ kammaṃ anuvidhāyanto kāresi. Na kevalaṃ thero yeva sabbe pi ariyā attanā attanā kattabbakiccesu ussukkam āpannā yeva ahesun 'ti imāhi tīhi iddhīhi katan ti veditabbaṃ. Vuttaṃ h'etaṃ mahāvaṃse:*

> *Indagutto mahāthero chaḷabhiñño mahāmatī,*
> *kammādhiṭṭhāyako ettha sabbaṃ saṃvidahīmaṃ.*
>
> *Sabbaṃ rāj'iddhiyā etaṃ devatānañ ca iddhiyā,*
> *iddhiyā ariyānañ ca asambādhaṃ patiṭṭhitan ti.*

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such, those lines present the general framework of Gotama Buddha's life-story and confirms that his aspiration to become a Buddha was an event of great significance to subsequent history.[142] The quotation does more than just reiterate what has already been mentioned in the narrative. It also foreshadows what is to come later in the text concerning the story of Prince Siddhattha and his transformation into Gotama Buddha:

> The Meritorious One Dīpaṅkara, having come, standing by the side of the head of wise Sumedha, and seeing the ascetic who was lying on top of the mud, reflecting, 'This ascetic has lied down, having made an aspiration for Buddhahood. Will then his wish succeed or not?,' and realizing that he would become a Buddha named Gotama in the future, and while standing, he predicted in the middle of the assembly, 'Monks, do you see this ascetic performing severe austerities who is lying on top of the mud?' 'Yes, Reverend.' 'This person has lied down making an aspiration for Buddhahood, and his goal will succeed. He will become a Buddha named Gotama at the end of four incalculables and one hundred-thousand eons,' and thus he predicted everything. Indeed this has been said in the *Buddhavaṃsa*:
>
> > Dīpaṅkara, the knower of the world and recipient of adoration, standing close to my head, spoke this speech,
> > 'Do you see this ascetic who has matted-hair, doing severe austerities? This one will become a Buddha in immeasurable aeons from now.
> > Indeed having set our from the delightful city of Kapila on horse, the Tathāgata, having exerted himself in striving, engaging in severe austerities...
> > Having sat at the foot of the Ajapāla tree, taking milk-rice there, the Tathāgata will come to the Nerañjarā [river].
> > The Conqueror, partaking in the milk-rice at the bank of the Nerañjarā, will then go by means of a well-prepared path to the foot of the Bodhi Tree.
> > Thereupon, the Incomparable One having great fame, having circled the Seat of Enlightenment with his right side, will be awakened at the foot of the Assattha Bodhi Tree.
> > The mother who gives birth to him will be called Māyā, the father called Suddhodana, and this one will be Gotama.

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[142] We will see below in chapters four and five that the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* picks up the emphasis given to the Bodhisattva's initial aspiration and speaks gratefully about the Buddha as a being who acted for the sake of all others.

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His foremost disciples will be Kolita and Upatissa, who will have no mental intoxicants, being without passion, having tranquil minds, and being attentive.

An attendant called Ānanda will serve this Conqueror, and Khemā and Uppalavaṇṇā will be his foremost female disciples,

Having no mental intoxicants, being without passion, having tranquil minds, and being attentive. And the Bodhi Tree of this Meritorious One will be called 'Assatha.'[143]

That quotation both reiterates the preceding narrative section and expands upon it, framing the career of Gotama Buddha by illustrating how it began with an aspiration and prediction made an immeasurably long time ago. Much of these early events leading up to Siddhārtha's Buddhahood are not included in the brief account of his life in the Pāli *Thūpavaṃsa*. Thus the quote enables Vācissara Thera to abridge the narrative leading up to the Buddha's *parinirvāṇa* and the

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143 *Thūp* 151-152: *Dīpaṅkaro pi bhagavā āgantvā sumedhapaṇḍitassa sīsabhāge ṭhatvā kalalapiṭṭhe nipannaṃ tāpasaṃ disvā, 'Ayaṃ tāpaso buddhattāya abhinīhāraṃ katvā nipanno. Ijjhissati nu kho etassa pattanā udāhu no' ti upadhārento, anāgate gotamo nāma buddho bhavissatīti ñatvā ṭhitako va parisamajjhe vyākāsi, 'Passatha no tumhe bhikkhave imaṃ uggatapaṃ tāpasaṃ kalalapiṭṭhe nipannan' ti. 'Evam bhante'. 'Ayaṃ buddhattāya abhinīharaṃ katvā nipanno, samijjhissati imassa patthanā kappasatasahassādhikānaṃ catunnaṃ asaṅkheyyānaṃ matthake gotamo nāma buddho bhavissatī 'ti sabbaṃ vyākāsi. Vuttaṃ h'etaṃ Buddhavaṃse:*

'Dīpaṅkaro lokavidū āhutīnaṃ paṭiggaho/
ussīsake maṃ ṭhatvāna idaṃ vacanam abruvī,
Passatha imaṃ tāpasaṃ jaṭilaṃ uggatāpanaṃ/
aparimeyye ito kappe ayaṃ buddho bhavissati.
Ahū kapilavhayā rammā nikkhamitvā tathāgato/
tattha pāyāsam aggayha nerañjaram upehiti.
Nerañjarāya tīramhi pāyāsam ādaya so jino/
paṭiyattavaramaggena bodhimūlamhi ehiti.
Tato padakkhiṇaṃ katvā bodhimaṇḍaṃ anuttaro/
assattharukkhamūlamhi bujjissati mahāyaso.
Imassa janikā mātā māyā nāma bhavissati,/
pitā suddhodana nāma, ayaṃ hessati gotamo.
Anāsavā vītarāgā santacittā samāhitā/
kolito upatisso ca aggā hessanti sāvakā.
Ānando nām'upaṭṭhāko upaṭṭhissat' imaṃ jinaṃ/
khemā uppalavaṇṇā ca aggā hessantii sāvikā,
Anāsavā vītarāgā santacittā samāhitā,/
bodhi tassa bhagavato assattho 'ti pavuccatī' ti.

Cf. *Bv* 9-10, vv. 60-69. See also *Ja-a* I. 16, which inserts the same verses in the midst of its prose narrative on the life of Sumedha.

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dispersal of his relics. The quote appears, then, to have been compiled for stylistic reasons and particularly to frame a reading of the entire text in conjunction with the biography of the Buddha.[144]

Therefore, even when a source is cited in the Pāli *Thūpavaṃsa*, it merely functions as a formal allusion to forthcoming material that is designed to reiterate or elaborate upon the narrative. Literary concerns thus appear to predominate over any perceived need to legitimate or authorize the narrative with reference to an older source, especially since we have remarked upon the infrequency with which such material is explicitly identified in the text. Moreover, as noted above in the opening verses to Vācissara's *Thūpavaṃsa*, it is said that the older "Chronicle of the Thūpa" written in Pāli "is confused with contradictory methods and words, and has much to be said that is not said." That statement repeats a commonly stated theme in Sri Lankan textual production, wherein earlier versions of a text are regularly said to be flawed, and thus the work at hand represents an improvement upon an older edition.[145]

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144 For an important discussion on the influence of the Buddha biography on shaping Buddhist practice and ideas, see Frank Reynolds, "The Many Lives of the Buddha" in *The Biographical Process: Studies in the History and Psychology of Religion*, ed. Frank Reynolds and Donald Capps (The Hague: Mouton, 1976): 37-66. More recently, Reynolds has pointed out that the "biography" of the Buddha became closely associated with the Theravāda chronicles and so, in turn, extend the original biography by narrating how the Buddha's influence in terms of his teachings, Sangha, and relics spread to other lands. See also his "Rebirth Traditions and the Lineages of Gotama: A Study in Theravāda Buddhology," in *Sacred Biography in the Buddhist Traditions of South and Southeast Asia*, ed. Juliane Schober (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997), pp. 28-29.

145 Again, a similar statement by Buddhaghosa in the opening verses to his *Samantapāsādikā* appears above in section one of this chapter. The author of the *Mahāvaṃsa* also imagines himself to be improving upon an older text: "Although that [*Mahāvaṃsa*] composed by the ancients is in some places too spread out, and in other places too contracted, and having many repetitions,/ [But] to that which has avoided those faults, is easily grasped and remembered, effecting serene joy and religious emotion, and handed down from tradition,/ May you listen, producing serene joy and profound disquiet at the places that generate serene joy and effect profound disquiet." See *Mhv.* I. 2-4: *Porāṇehi kato 'peso ativitthārito kvacil ativa kvaci saṅkhitto anekapunaruttako;/ Vajjitaṃ tehi dosehi*

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Rather than being an authentic copy of the earlier text and thus theoretically closer in time to the events it purports to descibe, Vācissara Thera's *Thūpavaṃsa* depicts its authenticity and worth as being self-evident and based upon its conformity to recognized standards of literary excellence. In other words, there is no need to base the claims of its narrative upon other authoritative sources since the well-composed *Thūpvaṃsa* itself constitutes an authoritative narrative that is deserving of one's attention.

In this regard, we may briefly note that the manner in which the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃssa* usually neglect to mention the sources of their quotations and other borrowed material in twelfth and thirteenth-century Sri Lanka resonates with what Paul Veyne has observed in ancient Greece and sixteenth-century France. That is to say, a dramatic gulf exists between the modern historiographical practice of demonstrating the validity of one's text through extensive citations and the older method whereby historical accounts achieved legitimacy through a consensus among readers and listeners over the ages.[146] Veyne's characterization of historical truth derived from tradition or "vulgate" corresponds with what we see as the reliance of the author and scribes upon the internal composition of the *Thūpavaṃsa* rather than on external authorities. Evidently, its citations and references to its sources are not included simply to make its account more believable or authoritative. Instead, by compiling

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sukhaggahaṇadhāraṇaṃ/ pasādasaṃvegakaraṃ sutito ca upagātaṃ/ pasādajanake ṭhāne tathā saṃvegakārake/ janayanto pasādañca saṃvegañca suṇātha taṃ.

146 Paul Veyne, *Did the Greeks Believe in Their Myths?: An Essay in the Constitutive Imagination*, trans. Paula Wissing (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1988), pp. 5-6.

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material from various texts, Vācissara Thera has striven to produce a well-written narrative that is both familiar and coherent.

The credibility of the *Thūpavaṃsa*'s account does not even appear to be at issue in the production of the text. Indeed, there is evidence that the text stresses incredible events and implicitly calls upon its readers and listeners to marvel at what it describes. On one occasion the text implies that it expects an audience will have trouble believing the story it relates. While describing the endless offerings made and deposited in the relic chamber of the Mahāthūpa, the narrator explains why a monk who was describing the many golden and jewelled offerings therein curtailed his account:

> Indeed, a Thera named Cittagutta who resided at Ambapāsāṇa, while expounding upon the Dhamma to twelve thousand monks assembled beneath the Brazen Palace, having begun the Rathavinīta Sutta, and describing the great relic deposit, thinking that some will not believe it, spoke with restraint. At that instant, an *arahant* named Mahātissa Thera who resided at Koṭapabbata, while sitting nearby and listening to the Dhamma, said, 'Friend, Dhamma-preacher! There is still something left out from your account. Speak in detail without holding back.' [147]

The above episode signals that even the narrator recognized that the invaluable and immeasurable offerings left in the relic chamber of the Mahāthūpa might be hard for people to believe. Yet we learn that disbelief is exactly the effect that the audience ought to have at first. The narrative anticipates and allows for skepticism before going on to present an analogous explanation that similar miraculous cases have occurred before. The narrator recalls that, later on, a

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[147] *Thūp* 235-236: *Tathā hi ambapāsāṇavāsī cittaguttatthero nāma heṭṭhā lohapāsāde sannipatitānaṃ dvādasannaṃ bhikkhusahassānaṃ dhammaṃ kathento rathavinītasuttaṃ ārabhitvā mahādhātunidhānaṃ vaṇṇento ekacce na saddahissantīti maññamāno osakkitvā kathesi. Tasmiṃ khaṇe koṭapabbatavāsī mahātissatthero nāma khīṇāsavo avidure nisīditvā dhammaṃ suṇanto: āvuso dhammakathika, tava kathāto parihīnam pi atthi, apaccosakkitvā vitthārena kathehīti āha.*

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monk answered the same question posed by a king who admitted that he could not understand how so many offerings could fit in a relich chamber that is eighty cubits on each side.[148] The monk makes the king realize that all the deities of two heavenly worlds were said to have once fit into the Indasāla Cave to listen to the Buddha's sermon. Likewise, he explains, that the psychic powers of the king, the deities, and the *arahants* enabled so many offerings to be deposited in the relic chamber. This explanation, apparently taken from the *Vaṃsatthappakāsinī*, suggests that the accounts of the *Thūpavaṃsa* might seem incredible, but like similar accounts in many other Buddhist narratives, they serve to testify to the appearance of the extraordinary in an otherwise ordinary world.[149]

The Pāli *Thūpavaṃsa* displays a mode of textual production wherein large amounts of material were collected from various sources and, in turn, presented within the framework of a complete and self-authenticating historical narrative. Vācissara Thera incoporates entire Pāli sections from Buddhaghosa's introduction to the *Samantapāsādikā*, his fifth-century commentary on the *Vinaya Piṭaka*, without explicitly mentioning this source by name. The *Thūpavaṃsa* apparently reproduces several lengthy prose passages found in that introductory text, which is called the *Bāhiranidāna*, nearly word for word. For instance, the account of the offerings that King Asoka (Sinh: Aśoka) received from the deities because of his great merit is found in both texts with only slight differences in terminology.[150] Likewise the Thera Moggaliputta

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148 See *Thūp* 237-238.

149 Cf. *Mhv-ṭ* 555-556.

150 Cf. *Thūp* 184-185 and *Sp* 165-166.

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Tissa's decision to dispatch monks to certain border countries, and the resulting reflection of Mahinda Thera concerning the proper time to go to Tambapaṇṇi (Sri Lanka) are found in forms that closely resemble each other.[151] The *Thūpavaṃsa*'s description of how the novice Sumana acquires the right collar-bone relic from the god Sakka, and how it is later brought to the site of the Thūpārāma *dāgāba* also follows closely to the account found in the *Bāhiranidāna*.[152] Several similar sections are also found in the account of the arrival of the Bodhi Tree to Sri Lanka and the predictions regarding where various sacred sites would later be established in the ancient capital city of Anurādhapura.[153]

A close comparison between the *Thūpavaṃsa* and the *Bāhiranidāna* of the *Samantapāsādikā* thus reveals that the latter text had a profound impact upon the former's narrative, overshadowing the influence of the *Mahāvaṃsa* with regards to the chapters dealing with the establishment of Buddhism in Sri Lanka. The following excerpts from the *Bāhiranidāna* and the *Thūpavaṃsa* will further serve to demonstrate the extent to which Vācissara Thera has adapted some of his material from Buddhaghosa's commentary in order to retell the episodes leading up to the construction of the Mahāthūpa, the large relic shrine (P: *thūpa*; Sinh: *dāgāba*) in Anurādhapura. First, we will examine the earlier commentarial account and highlight in boldface the material that is not found in the *Thūpavaṃsa*:

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151 Cf. *Thūp* 191-192 and *Sp* 182, 186-187.

152 Cf. *Thūp* 197-199 and *Sp* 197-199.

153 See, for example, *Thūp* 201-202, and *Sp* 202-205; *Thūp* 204 and *Sp* 211-212.

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> The Venerable Mahāmahinda, having spent the rains retreat, said this to the king on the *poya* day of the full moon of [the month of] Kattika, **'Great King, it has been long since the Fully Awakened Buddha has been seen by us. We dwell in a helpless state. We wish to go to Jambudīpa.' The king said, 'Reverend! I attend to you with the four requisites. On account of you this great populace has been established in the Three Refuges. Why are you dissatisfied?' 'Great King!** It has been long since the Fully Awakened Buddha has been seen by us. There is no site for performing salutations, reverence, honor, and devotion. For this reason we are dissatisfied.' 'Is it not the case Reverend that you have said that the Fully Awakened Buddha has passed away completely?' 'Even though he has passed away completely his bodily relics remain.' 'It is understood, Reverend, **that you wish for the establishment of a *thūpa*. I will make a *thūpa*.** May you **now** select the location. But **Reverend**, from where will I obtain the relics?' 'Consult with Sumana, Great King.' **Saying, 'Very well, Reverend,'** the king approached Sumana and asked, 'Now from where will I obtain the relics, Reverend?' Sumana said, 'You ought not to fret, Great King. Cleaning the roads, adorning them with banners, flags, and filled pitchers, etc., undertaking the *poya* precepts along with your attendants, go toward the Mahānāgavana Park in the evening being attended by all the musicians, having decorated the royal elephant with all the ornaments, and having raised the white parasol above it. Assuredly you will receive the relics at that place.' The king assented, saying 'Very well.'[154]

In comparison, the following passage from the Pāli *Thūpavaṃsa* illustrates how closely Vācissara Thera relies on the above narrative from the *Bāhiranidāna* in his account:

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154 *Sp* 197: *Athāyasmā mahāmahindo vutthavasso pavāretvā kattikapuṇṇamāyaṃ uposathadivase rājānaṃ etad avoca mahārāja, amhehi ciraditṭho sammāsambuddho, anāthavāsaṃ vasimha. Icchāma jambudīpaṃ gantun ti. Rājā āha, ahaṃ bhante tumhe catūhi paccayehi upaṭṭhahāmi. Ayañ ca mahājano tumhe nissāya tīsu saraṇesu patiṭṭhito. Kasmā tumhe ukkaṇṭhitāti. Ciraditṭho no mahārāja sammāsambuddho. Abhivādana-paccuṭṭhāna-añjalikamma-sāmīcikammakaraṇaṭṭhānaṃ n'atthi. Tena 'mha ukkaṇṭhitāti. Nanu bhante tumhe avocuttha, parinibbuto sammāsambuddho ti. Kiñcāpi mahārāja parinibbuto, atha khv assa sarīradhātuyo tiṭṭhantīti. Aññātaṃ bhante thūpapatiṭṭhānaṃ tumhe ākaṅkhathāti, karomi bhante thūpaṃ, bhūmibhāgaṃ dāni vicinātha. Api ca bhante dhātuyo kuto lacchāmāti. Sumanena saddhiṃ mantehi mahārājāti. Sādhu bhante to rājā sumanaṃ upasaṅkamitvā pucchi, kuto dāni bhante dhātuyo lacchāmāti. Sumano āha, apposukko tvaṃ mahārāja vīthiyo sodhāpetvā dhajapatākapuṇṇaghaṭādhīhi alaṅkārāpetvā saparijano uposathaṃ samādiyitvā sabbatālāvacare upaṭṭhapetvā maṅgalahatthiṃ sabbālaṅkārapatimaṇḍitaṃ kāretvā upari c' assa setacchattaṃ ussāpetvā sāyaṇhasamaye mahānāgavanuyyānābhimukho yāhi. Addhā etasmiṃ ṭhāne dhātuyo lacchasīti. Rājā, sādhūti sampaṭicchi.*

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> The Venerable Mahāmahinda, having spent the rains retreat, said this to the king on the *poya* day of the full moon of [the month of] Kattika, ' It has been long since the Fully Awakened Buddha has been seen by us. There is no site for performing salutations, reverence, honor, and devotion. For this reason we are dissatisfied.' 'Is it not the case Reverend that you have said that the Fully Awakened Buddha has passed away completely?' 'Even though he has passed away completely his bodily relics remain.' 'It is understood, Reverend. **I will establish a *thūpa*.** May you select the location. But from where will I obtain the relics?' 'Consult with Sumana, Great King.' The king, having approached Sumana, asked, 'Now from where will I obtain the relics, Reverend?' Sumana said, 'You ought not to fret, Great King. Cleaning the roads, adorning them with banners, flags, and filled pitchers, etc., undertaking the *poya* precepts along with your attendants, go toward the Mahānāgavana Park in the evening being attended by all the musicians, having decorated the royal elephant with all the ornaments, and having raised the white parasol above it. Assuredly you will receive the relics at that place.' The king assented, saying 'Very well.'[155]

Lifting out much of the narrative from Buddhaghosa's text, Vācissara Thera edits the older account and inserts it into his history. Some of his changes are stylistic, such as omitting the repetitive phrase in the commentary where the Ven. Mahinda twice states that "it has been a long time since the Fully Awakened Buddha has been seen by us." Yet Vācissara also removes the line where the monk says they wish to go to Jambudīpa, perhaps because it is inconsistent with an earlier conversation in which he assured the king that they are not leaving Laṅkā: "Great King, we do not desire to go."[156]

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155 *Thūp* 197: *Athāyasmā mahāmahindo vutthavasso pavāretvā kattikapuṇṇamāyaṃ uposathadivase rājānaṃ etad avoca, ciraditṭho no mahārāja sammāsambuddho. Abhivādana-paccuṭṭhāna-añjalikamma-sāmīcikammakaraṇaṭṭhānaṃ n'atthi. Tena 'mha ukkaṇṭhitāti. Nanu bhante tumhe avocuttha, parinibbuto sammāsambuddho ti. Kiñcāpi mahārāja parinibbuto, atha 'ssa sarīradhātuyo tiṭṭhantīti. Aññātaṃ bhante thūpaṃ patiṭṭhāpemi, bhūmibhāgaṃ dāni vicināthāti, api ca dhātuyo kuto lacchāmīti. Sumanena saddhiṃ mantehi mahārājāti. Rājā sumanaṃ upasaṅkamitvā pucchi, kuto dāni bhante dhātuyo lacchāmāti. Sumano āha, apposukko tvaṃ mahārāja vīthiyo sodhāpetvā dhajapatākapuṇṇaghaṭādhīhi alaṅkārāpetvā saparijano uposathaṃ samādiyitvā sabbatālāvacare upaṭṭhapetvā maṅgalahatthiṃ sabbālaṅkārapatimaṇḍitaṃ kāretvā upari c' assa setacchattaṃ ussāpetvā sāyaṇhasamaye mahānāgavanuyyānābhimukho yāhi. Addhā tasmiṃ ṭhāne dhātuyo lacchasīti. Rājā, sādhūti sampaṭicchi.*

156 *Thūp* 197: *Na mayaṃ mahārāja gantukāmā.* Cf. *Sp* 196, which contains the very same words.

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Therefore, considering the manner in which the *Thūpavaṃsa* compiled material from other texts, adapting and inserting it into its narrative, it would seem that the production of this Pāli history reflects the overriding concern of authors to compose a work that has an integrity of its own and yet also generally conforms to traditional accounts. The free use of quotes and wholesale copying of prose passages found in other texts should be seen less as an indictment of the lack of creativity or originality than as a common style of writing Buddhist literature in medieval Sri Lanka. As Geiger has shown in *The Dīpavaṃsa and Mahāvaṃsa*, many of the medieval Pāli *vaṃsakathā* display clear evidence of having incorporated large amounts of their narrative from commentaries and chronicles dating from the first millenium of the common era. Therefore, in the case of the *Thūpavaṃsa*, the line between an "author" and a "scribe" is considerably blurred since its method of composition evidently entailed collecting parts of other texts and reworking them to fit into a new narrative form. On the one hand, this method of history-writing could be somewhat pejoratively called "cutting and pasting." However, as we will see below, this practice is perhaps better referred to as "sampling," in reference to the contemporary style of lifting sections of music and singing out of other songs and inserting them into one's own to produce certain effects in popular music.[157] While we have begun to see how the Pāli *Thūpavaṃsa* was composed according to literary concerns as much as historical ones, many of the intents that lie behind the production of this text, I wish to argue, become seen

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[157] I wish to credit Charles Hallisey for suggesting this comparison to me.

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more clearly through a comparison with the textual production of the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa*.

I.3 BUDDHIST HISTORY IN A SINHALA TRANSLATION

It has been pointed out repeatedly that since the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* has incorporated much information that is not found in the extant Pāli *Thūpavaṃsa*, it cannot rightly be considered a "translation" of the latter.[158] Indeed, prior to the Sinhala translation of the *Mahāvaṃsa* that was done in 1874, few if any of the Sinhala *vaṃsas*—namely, the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa*, *Daḷadā Sirita*, *Sinhala Bodhivaṁśaya*, *Anāgatavaṃsa Dēsanā*, *Dhātuvaṁśaya*, *Daḷadā Pūjāvaliya*, and *Eḷu Attanagalu Vaṁśaya* for example—could be taken as line-by-line translations of a comparable Pāli text. On the contrary, those Sinhala texts composed around the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries in Sri Lanka regularly elaborate upon the contents and style of their antecedent and corresponding Pāli narratives. We are then led to ask what happens in the act of "translating" a Pāli history into the Sinhala language. Interesting evidence of authorial or scribal choices appear in the course of examining the effort made to render the Pāli *Thūpavaṃsa* into the local, literary dialect of Sinhala. As such, I will maintain that it is helpful to look at the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* as a kind of commentary upon the Pāli version, upon which Parākrama Paṇḍita rewrote the narrative while adding his own gloss to clarify meanings and enhance the literary effects that he detected in Vācissara's work. The *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa*

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158 Godakumbura, *Sinhalese Literature*, p. 108; Kulasuriya, *Sinhala Sāhityaya I*, p. 203; Sannasgala, *Sinhala Sāhitya Vaṃsaya*, p. 193. In contrast, Geiger has noted that, despite the fact that the *Sinhalā Thūpavaṃsa* has longer supplements and contains more details than the Pāli *Thūpavaṃsa*, the considerable agreement between both texts so that "the one seems almost to be merely a translation of the other." See his *The Dīpavaṃsa and Mahāvaṃsa*, p. 83.

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thus provides us with a window through which we can begin to see how the Pāli *Thūpavaṃsa* and Buddhist histories in general were read in medieval Sri Lanka.

Again, following the argument made earlier in this chapter, a study of the production and circulation of the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* sheds light upon what Buddhist histories were envisioned to accomplish in the Sri Lankan Theravāda Buddhist community. At one level, the choice to compose a text in Sinhala signified a distinct view of one's intended audience. The Pāli language represented a cosmopolitan, trans-local language that was in currency among monastics throughout South and Southeast Asian lands, and further entailed an audience of monks, nuns, and scholars who possessed a specialized knowledge of that language.[159] As the canonical language of the Tipiṭaka, Pāli was a language largely reserved for scholarship and religious functions such as Dhamma sermons and administering the blessings of *paritta* chants.[160] In contrast to the cosmopolitan and scholastic domains of Pāli literature, Sinhala

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159 Again, see *Thūp* 147, where Vācissara Thera explains in the opening lines to his text that the Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa* was unable to accomplish the welfare of all people. Furthermore, a verse found in the thirteenth-century *Dāṭhāvaṃsa* effectively illustrates the cosmopolitan audiences imagined by many medieval authors of Pāli works: "Although the Chronicle of the Tooth Relic of the Conqueror has been written in the island of Sīhaḷa by poets in the language of their own land, I will compose it however in the Māgadha language for the prosperity of those who reside outside the island." See *Dāṭh*, v. 10: *Sadesabhāsāya kavīhi sīhaḷe/ kataṃ pi vaṃsaṃ jinadantadhātuyā/ niruttiyā māgadhikāya vuddhiyā/ karomi dīpantaravāsinaṃ api.*

160 In this regard, Ananda Kulasuriya draws our attention to a passage in *Manorathapūranī* that describes how preachers would at times read from written materials during sermons. See his, "The Art of Writing and Sinhalese Palmleaf Manuscripts," *The Sri Lanka Journal of the Humanities* 17 & 18, nos. 1 & 2 (1991-1992), p. 239. Furthermore, like monks today, monks in the past would have surely quoted Pāli verses from memory while addressing an audience of Buddhist devotees. There is also evidence that the chanting of Pāli verses, known as *paritta*, has been an exceedingly common practice among most Sri Lankan Buddhists for centuries. For a detailed examination of the history and practice of *paritta* (Sinh: *pirit*) chanting, see Lily de Silva, *Paritta: The Buddhist Ceremony for Peace and Prosperity* (Colombo: The Colombo Museum, 1981).

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works were directed to an audience composed of Sinhala-speaking monastics and laypersons within Sri Lanka. It would be incorrect, however, to simply assume that texts like the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* were vernacular histories. The Sinhala language is characterized by diglossia, or the existence of sharply distinct written and spoken varieties of a single language, and it is highly doubtful that the language of medieval Sinhala histories mirrored the spoken language of Sri Lankans at the time.[161] The written prose of the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* makes frequent use of Sanskrit loan words and complex sentence structures that point more to a literary than a colloquial usage. Generally speaking, the ornate style of Sinhala literature after the tenth century C.E. can be traced to the frequent use of Sanskrit words to express new concepts with greater explicitness and precision, as well as the influence of Sanskrit poetics to enhance the literary effects of Buddhist texts.[162]

Still, the audience for a Sinhala text was implicitly a local one, and hence this fact suggests the greater use of local idioms and the freedom to craft narratives to suit the interests and tastes of a specifically Sri Lankan audience. Their literary dialect notwithstanding, there is some inscriptional and textual evidence that at least some Sinhala texts were occassionally recited aloud to the public at large. Senarath Paranavitana has translated an inscription carved in

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[161] G. D. Wijayawardhana has remarked that the idiom and style of writing in medieval Sinhala literature shows that such texts were the pursuit of a relatively small number of literate elites. See his "Literature in Buddhist Religious Life" in *Religiousness in Sri Lanka*, ed. John Ross Carter (Colombo: Marga Institute, 1979), p. 68. On the phenomenon of diglossia in the Sinhala language, see the relevant chapters in James W. Gair, *Studies in South Asian Linguistics: Sinhala and Other South Asian Languages*, ed. Barbara C. Lust (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

[162] Sumana Saparamadu, "The Sinhalese Language and Literature of the Polonnaruwa Period," in *The Polonnaruwa Period*, ed. S. D. Saparamadu (1955; reprint, Dehiwala, Sri Lanka: Tisara Prakasakayo, 1973), pp. 114-115.

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the stone pavement near the Mahāthūpa that states how in 1204 C.E. a number of noble personages led a public celebration near the shrine and "listened to the *Thūpavaṃśa* on the platform of the *Ruvanmālī* itself."[163] Many scholars take that particular *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* to be a different and earlier version of Parākrama Paṇḍita's text. Yet the fact that such a chronicle was recited during a public ritual and the manner in which sections of the extant *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* appear to resemble the spoken style of sermons should be enough to permit the conclusion that at least parts of the text were likely read aloud to an audience on certain occasions.[164]

Moreover, it seems probable that other Sinhala histories were recited in that period. The authors of some of these works occasionally make the explicit assumption that their texts would be read aloud to an audience. Vilgammula Thera, who composed the *Sinhala Bōdhivaṁśaya* in the first part of the fourteenth century, suggests as much while writing of himself and his audience in the third person:

> While being requested by that king [Parākramabāhu IV] who is endowed with the collection of virtues previously mentioned, having written this account of the *Bōdhivaṁśa* in our own language [*svabhāṣāyen*] for the sake of the easy understanding of all persons, he made it reach the pinnacle. Turning their ears, fixing their minds, and

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163 For the entire inscription, see Senarath Paranavitana's translation of "The Ruvanvālisāya Slab-Inscription of Queen Kalyāṇavatī" in *Epigraphia Zeylanica*, Vol. IV, ed. S. Paranavitana (London: Oxford University Press, 1939): 253-260.

164 Godakumbura, *Sinhalese Literature*, p. 109. The historian M. B. Ariyapala, who himself has studied thirteenth-century Sri Lankan history in great detail, is of the opinion that the narrative of the *Thūpavaṃsa* formed an integral part of the ritual worship at the *dāgāba* (personal communication, 11/19/96). Similarly, the current editor of the Sinhala dictionary, Wimal Balagalle has suggested that the *Thūpavaṃsa* was read aloud as part of an annual ceremony for the monastery which served as the custodian for the *dāgaba*, and as such the text also functioned as a *de facto* history of the monastery itself (personal communication, 5/5/97). One might infer from these theories that the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* was not only composed with the intention of being recited, but also that it was recited at specific circumstances in conjunction with a set of devotional practices at the site.

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listening attentively, virtuous persons desiring welfare for themselves should accomplish the felicities of heaven and release.[165]

Despite the proliferation of Sanskrit terms and lengthy sentences in the above Sinhala work, the author anticipates that his text would be read aloud to benefit Sinhala speakers who were unable to access the Pāli *Mahābodhivaṃsa*. In this instance, "all persons" does not represent people outside of Sri Lanka who do not know Sinhala, but rather connotes a wider population of Sri Lankans.[166] Similarly, Mahinda Deegalle has shown that the thirteenth-century *Pūjāvaliya* makes the claim that even illiterate persons who lived in remote regions of the island of Laṅkā were capable of listening to its narrative and coming to know the virtues of the Buddha when its Sinhala prose is recited by others.[167] Such claims continue to suggest that the audience for Sinhala histories was seen to consist of local readers and listeners.

Additional information regarding how the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* was read and for whom it was composed may be discerned through an examination of the production and dissemination of this text during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Since Buddhist texts in Sri Lanka have traditionally been written on dried palm leaves, they have always been susceptible to decay in the island's humid climate. As a result of this and also the periodic destructions of

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165 *SBōdhv* 249-250: *Pūrvoktaguṇagaṇōpēta ē rajatumā visin samārādhita vū sēk, mē bōdhivaṁśa kathāva siyalu janayangē sukhāvabodhaya piṇisa svabhāṣāyen liyavā mastakaprāpta koṭā vadāḷa sēka. Tamahaṭa hitavāḍa kāmāti satpuruṣayan visin kan namā sit yomā sāvadhāna vā asā svargamōkṣa sampat siddha kaṭa yutu.*

166 What is striking about the above excerpt from *Sinhala Bōdhivaṁśaya* is how a common theme in the textual production of Pāli literature is inverted to justify the decision for writing in Sinhala. As we have seen above in the opening verses to the Pāli *Thūpavaṃsa*, Vācissara Thera describes the Sinhala version of the "Chronicle of the Thūpa" as being limited by its inability to "fully accomplish the welfare of all people [*sabbajanassa*]."

167 See Mahinda Deegalle, "Buddhist Preaching and Sinhala Religious Rhetoric: Medieval Buddhist Methods to Popularize Theravāda" *Numen* XLIV, No. 2 (May 1997), pp. 191-192.

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monastic libraries by invaders, the vast majority of the extant manuscripts are no more than a few hundred years old.[168] However, thanks to the diligent cataloguing of palm-leaf books by both western and Sri Lankan scholars, we may still construct an informed impression of how a text like the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* existed and circulated in manuscript form. Hugh Nevill wrote with regard to this text that its various sections detailing the career of the Bodhisattva, the life-story of Gotama Buddha, the life-story of King Aśoka, and the life-story of King Duṭugāmuṇu in a more narrowly defined division of material probably owe their origin to separate accounts that were compiled together to form the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa*. He cites in particular the continued existence of an older and briefer text called *Ruvanvāli-kathāva* that he thinks formed the nucleus of the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* and around which other accounts were later added.[169] This text deals with the building of the Mahāthūpa by Duṭugāmuṇu, and as such may have provided some material for the text composed by Parākrama Paṇḍita in the thirteenth century. Nevill bases this judgement largely on the facts that this text has survived in a "very simple old Sinhalese" and contains elaborate accounts of the relic chamber of the *thūpa* and the process that went into its construction.[170] Yet Nevill's conclusion may be premature as it remains unclear whether the *Ruvanvāli-kathāva* that he has

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168 I have come across references to two thirteenth-century manuscripts mentioned as the oldest extant manuscripts from Sri Lanka. Ananda Kulasuriya notes that a thirteenth-century copy of *Pūjāvaliya* still exists. See his "Sinhala Writing and the Transmission of Texts in Pre-Modern Times," *The Sri Lanka Journal of the Humanities* 16, nos. 1 & 2 (1990), p. 185. Meanwhile, in the *Catalogue of Palm Leaf Manuscripts in the Library of the Colombo Museum*, W. A. De Silva has noted that an edition of the Pāli Cūllavagga from the thirteenth century is the oldest extant manuscript in Sri Lanka (pp. xxviii-xxix).

169 Hugh Nevill quoted in K. D. Somadasa, *HNC*, vol. 1 (London: Pali Text Society, 1987), pp. 220-221.

170 K. D. Somadasa, *HNC*, vol. 2 (London: Pali Text Society, 1989), p. 103.

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examined predates the extant *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa*. Indeed, as we will show, the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* appears to have made use of a variety of sources while staying close to the narrative structure of the Pāli *Thūpavaṃsa* and even paraphrasing several of the latter's accounts. Moreover, the text displays evidence of the author's creative hand in addition to the "sampling" of other texts.

A further survey of the Nevill Catalogue yields the fact that manuscript copies of the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* display a considerable variance of content and form, with distinct differences found in the organization of the text. Aside from the expected variants that come with the scribal practice of copying manuscripts by hand, one finds a number of instances where a particular text is incomplete or missing a section of pages in the middle.[171] More interesting for our purposes however, is the existence of the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa*'s "Account of the Brazen Palace" (*Lōvāmahapā Kathāva*) bound separately with other Jātaka tales and religious discourses in an *ad hoc* anthology of various, largely unrelated texts.[172] The presence of a section from the text found independently of it suggests that the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* did not always exist as an entire text, but rather could occasionally be broken up and bound with works dealing with subjects other than the historical narratives of the *vaṃsa*s. From this we may infer that the narrative was not indivisible, but could be split up and repackaged for the sake of inspiring an audience. In other words, the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* was at times circulated in sections, marking its usage in a manner

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171 Cf. W. A. De Silva, *Catalogue of Palm Leaf Manuscripts in the Library of the Colombo Museum*, where four or five of the nine ola-leaf manuscripts of the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* at the Colombo Library are apparently incomplete (pp. 311-312).

172 Somadasa, *HNC*, vol. 1, pp. 222-225.

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other than a complete historical narrative. Significantly, in two other instances the complete text is bound with a short text called *Dharmānisaṃsaya* which extols the merit in writing and listening to the Dhamma.[173] This might again suggest to us that the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* was taken as a text that not only deals with recalling history, but also was conceived to function as a religious text with potential meritorious effects for pious readers and listeners.[174]

Despite the fact that chapters of the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* were sometimes selected out of the complete text and used independently, there is other material evidence that the text existed in a fairly complete and independent form in Sri Lanka during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The exhaustive survey of *ola* leaf manuscripts in Buddhist temple libraries done by K. D. Somadasa in the mid-twentieth century shows that hand-written manuscripts of the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* were in general widespread and complete. He notes in his *Laṅkāvē Puskoḷa Pot Nāmāvaliya* that three hundred

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173 K. D. Somadasa, *HNC*, vol. 4, (London: Pali Text Society, 1990),pp. 172-173. Godakumbura notes that the *Dharmānisaṃsaya* is a short religious manual that has appeared along with comparable manuals on alms-giving (*dāna*), morality (*sīla*), and the Refuges (*saraṇa*). See his *Sinhalese Literature*, p. 80.

174 This idea is further reinforced by the presence of the opening reverential formula "*namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammasambuddhassa*" ("Reverence to that Meritorious One, the Worthy, Fully Awakened Buddha") followed by a Pāli verse in many of the manuscript editions that have been catalogued. For example, see #2009 in De Silva's *Catalogue of Palm Leaf Manuscripts*, where the opening formula is followed by the slightly modifed *Dhammapada* verse: *sabbapāpassa akaraṇaṃ/ kusalassa upasampadā/ sacittapariyodapanaṃ/ etaṃ buddhanusāsanaṃ* ("The non-performance of all evil, the cultivation of the wholesome, together with the purification of the mind, this is the instruction of the Buddha"), p. 311. Manuscripts Or.6600(141) and Or.6606(92) in *HNC* also follow this opening, with the exception of adhering to the standard final *pada* of the verse: "*etaṃ buddhana sāsanaṃ*," ("this is the teaching of the Buddhas"). Versions of a different verse can be found in *HNC* Or.6606(93), # 2017 in W. A. De Silva, and #44 in Liyanaratne's *Catalogue des Manuscripts Singhalais*. And one finds the verse: *saddhamadesanākale sādhu sādhūti bhāsato/ mukhato vāyāti gandho upphalaṃvā (sic) yat[h]odake* ("At the time of the preaching of the Excellent Teaching, the scent wafting from the mouth of those saying "Sādhu! Sādhu!", is just like a water-lily in the water") in *HNC* Or.6606(95) and Or.6606(98).

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and seven Buddhist temples around the island collectively possessed 358 editions of the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa*, of which only seventeen are listed as being incomplete.[175] For his part, Nevill also affirmed that this text was in wide circulation when he was collecting manuscripts:

> This work is very abundant, but as it is prized for actual use, very ancient copies would be rare, having been largely replaced by new copies, easier to read, as the others grew old. My own library contains several good copies, one which No. 2C may be 100 years or so old, or even 150 years. I have however no copy of 200 years and upwards. I have not met with the works composed under the Kotte dynasty, so widely distributed as this, and copies of such of them as do occur in obscure villages, can generally be traced by tradition to this or that priest, who purchased it from a low country trader within the last century, or procured it from one of the great monasteries at Kandy.[176]

Therefore on the basis of the above information we may tentatively conclude that the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* was a text that, by at least the nineteenth century, was widely circulated as both a complete text and in smaller sections. Manuscripts of this Sinhala text also appear to exist in much greater numbers than the Pāli *Thūpavaṃsa*.[177] As we have noted, there is reason to believe that the text was deeemed to have a role in cultivating people's piety, which may help us to account for the fact of its widespread distribution around the island. Moreover, the fact that the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* was occasionally if infrequently divided and/or bound with other texts signifies that it could be used in ways apart from the recalling of a complete historical narrative.

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[175] K. D. Somadasa, *Laṅkāvē Puskoḷa Pot Nāmāvaliya*, vols. 1 & 2, (Colombo: Cultural Department, 1959-1964), p. 35 and p. 27, respectively. Note also that among manuscripts that bear some variation on the title "*Ruvanvālidāgāb Varṇanāva*," Somadasa apparently found fifty-two (1: 81; 2: 62).

[176] Hugh Nevill quoted in Somadasa, *HNC*, vol. 1, p. 221.

[177] In comparison, Somadasa notes the presence of only 34 manuscripts of the Pāli *Thūpavaṃsa* in 31 temples. See his *Laṅkāvē Puskoḷa Pot Nāmāvaliya*, 1: 35; 2: 27.

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Was the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* produced as a translation or a compilation? Upon inspection of the extant text itself, we find evidence of both activities in the composition of the text. The difficulty that scholars have in classifying this text may result from the fact that while at times Parākrama Paṇḍita appears merely to be translating accounts from the Pāli *Thūpavaṃsa* into Sinhala, at other times he seems to be composing a new narrative. It is for that reason that I am inclined to view the act of translating a Pāli history into Sinhala as a form of commentarial practice, whereby the author adds new material to explain and enhance the former text. The *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* thus illustrates how Buddhist histories were written not simply to reconstruct a true and comprehensive account of the past, but rather functioned as literary works composed to convey specific habits of thought and feeling to an audience in a manner akin to the creative and affective work associated primarily with poetry. In other words, the Sinhala translation of the Pāli *Thūpavaṃsa* demonstrates that a creative rendering was valued more than a literal rendering, and this consequently forces us to consider Buddhist history-writing as a practice that seeks to change an audience as it changes its received narratives.

It is worth noting that Parākrama Paṇḍita's *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* nowhere refers to itself as a translation, nor does it even acknowledge the existence of other "Chronicles of the Thūpa." While, as we have noted, Vācissara Thera claims to have "written" or "copied down" (P: *likhita*) the Pāli *Thūpavaṃsa*, Parākrama Paṇḍita only claims that the text was "made" or

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"composed" (Sinh: *karana lada*) by him.[178] The ambiguity in this statement is significant since it reveals that our author did not see himself as simply rewriting or translating another text. The absence of any contrastive reference to a Pāli text in the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* distinguishes this text from a number of other Sinhala chronicles that describe themselves as Sinhala editions of existing Pāli histories, even though they add considerable amounts of new material.[179] Indeed, there are signs that Parākrama Paṇḍita has taken material from a number of extant Pāli and Sinhala texts, many of which were also variously used to compose the Pāli *Thūpavaṃsa*. Kulasuriya has noted that, aside from the Pali *Thūpavaṃsa*, Parākrama Paṇḍita's text has made use of the *Jātaka-nidānakathā*, *Samantapāsādikā*, *Buddhavaṃsa*, *Madhuratthavilāsinī*, *Mahāvaṃsa*, *Mahāvaṃsa-Ṭīkā*, and the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* in the composition of its narrative.[180] Sannasgala, for his part, also mentions the *Jinālaṅkara* as a source for the expanded narrative on the life of the Buddha in the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa*.[181] We also find that our author appears to have borrowed from

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178 *SThūp* 196: *Sakalavidyā Cakravarti Parākrama Paṇḍitayan visin karana lada thūpavaṃsa kathāva kiyā nimavana ladī*. Note that *SThūp*$_2$ reads slightly differently as "*Sakalavidyā Cakravarti Parākrama Paṇḍitayan visin karana lada thūpavaṃsa kathāva nimi*," (p. 222). *SThūp*$_3$ reads "*Sakalavidyā Cakravarti Parākrama Paṇḍitottamayan visin karana lada thūpavaṃsa kathāva kiyā nimavana ladī*," (p. 214). The colophon in *SThūp*$_4$ is identical to what is mentioned above for *SThūp*.

179 For example, the fourteenth-century *Eḷu Attanagalu Vaṁśaya* includes the phrase "made available in our own Sinhala language" (*svakīya sinhalabhāṣāyen pravarttita*) with reference to the Pāli *Hatthavanagallavihāra Vaṃsa*. See *AttgV* 29. The author of the *Sinhala Bodhivaṁśaya* similarly remarks of, "having written this account of the *Bōdhivaṁśa* in our own language." See *SBōdh* 249-250.

180 Kulasuriya, *Sinhala Sāhityaya I*, p. 212.

181 Sannasgala, *Sinhala Sāhityaya Vaṁśaya*, p. 193. I am not particularly convinced that the *Jinālaṅkara* contributed substantially to the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa*'s narrative of the Buddha's life-story. There is one verse (*Jināl* v. 31), however, that appears to include much of the same imagery that is found in a similar passage from the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa*:

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the "Mahaparinibbāṇa Sutta" of *Dīgha Nikāya* for the accounts of the death of the Buddha and the distribution of his relics, as well as *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī* for additional details in this episode.[182]

Yet the method of compilation in the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* appears somewhat distinct from what he have seen in Vācissara's *Thūpavaṃsa* since Parākrama Paṇḍita shows a tendency to take an even greater license to alter and emend his sources. As we will see later on, the act of translating a Pāli account into Sinhala occasions the use of paraphrase and elaboration in place of a method where one strictly copies another source word for word. Yet even when he seems to be adapting material from other Sinhala sources, Parākrama Paṇḍita assumes considerable independence in crafting an original narrative based upon older sources. In one example, Parākrama Paṇḍita appears to borrow substantially from the thirteenth-century *Butsaraṇa*'s account where the elephant Nālāgiri was made to charge the Buddha when he describes how King Duṭugämuṇu made his elephant Kaḍol charge the warrior Nandimitra.[183] The

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He gave blood in excess of the water in the ocean,
He gave offerings of his flesh excelling the earth,
And his head with the crest-gem in excess of the measure of Meru,
And he gave his eyes greatly exceeding the stars in the sky.

Cf. that verse with the following words attributed to the Buddha in *SThūp* 56: "Innumerable are the times that, having cut with the sword in my hand, I gave my own head adorned with the crown, excelling the Great Meru Mountain that has a height of 168,000 leagues for the sake of this [Bodhi] seat. Innumerable are the times when I plucked out and gave my eyes that shone with the five colors, excelling the stars in the sky. . . .".

182 The *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* mentions that its episode regarding a deity named Varavāraṇa who, upon hearing that a Buddha will be born, starts to thread a garland to make an offering is found "in *Dīrgha Nikāya*," but in fact it comes from the commentary entitled *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī*. Cf. *SThūp* 68 and *Sv* II. 576.

183 In the introduction to his edition of the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa*, Balagalle notes that in at least four places, Parākrama Paṇḍita appears to be borrowing from the *Butsaraṇa*. These include the account of the Māra daughters, the description of the Buddha image shown to King Aśoka, the episode where Kaḍol charges Nandimitra, and the deities' praise of the relics during their deposit at the Ruvanvāli Sāya (pp. xxviii-xxxvi). For a full translation of the episode where the Buddha tames Nālāgiri, see C.H.B. Reynolds, ed., *An Anthology of*

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following quote from the *Butsaraṇa* begins with the Buddha walking on a road and, as before, the boldface words will indicate material that is not present in the other text:

> **Having heard the news that [the Buddha] had come, the elephant handlers,** causing the elephant **who stood like a column of smoke that has risen from the fire at the end of an eon, like a great black mountain, and like a great rain cloud that rose up to destroy the eon,** to drink **sixteen pots of** toddy, **as if pouring oil on a glowing fire, and making him intoxicated,** speaking words suitable to anger him, sounded drums and horns, **and so on, all at once instantly.** At that moment, **the intoxicated elephant** who was fierce like a column of fire in the Avīci Hell that went out through the Mare's Mouth, burning the mass of the ocean's water, **having curled up his trunk,** and while making the great earth resound like **a bell** that was struck by an iron bar, making **the whole city** rumble **like a thunderclap** from the sound of his trumpeting, and at the moment in which he yanked **the iron chain that bound** his foot angrily, **breaking and** shattering the iron chain as if breaking a spider's thread, having overturned the post to which he was tied as if pulling up a lotus stalk, stomping and breaking it into pieces, striking and pulverizing the elephant stable **where he was,** having **split and** rolled up the post that had been broken, placing it between his tusks, and splitting the great earth from the stomping when he stomped at his own shadow, **and causing dread from the earth that had come upon his tusks, digging at the great earth with his nails, and while taking that earth and scattering it over his back,** running and chasing [people] down, and while lifting and piercing the corpses that he **seized and** split in two on the tips of his tusks, chasing down cattle and buffalo with a face smeared with blood and with tusks smeared with blood, piercing and splitting them in two, and while causing the eyes of those who looked to shut from **the tusks that were wrapped with** their entrails, putting his trunk in his mouth, shaking his head and roaring, **and while piercing, throwing aside, and shattering gates, towers, ramparts, and foundations,** he came and entered upon the main road.[184]

Sinhalese Literature: Up to 1815 (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1970): 109-117. Note that Godakumbura remarks in his *Sinhalese Literature* that the author of *Butsaraṇa*, Vidyācakravarti, is not far removed from authors who wrote in the late twelfth century (p. 5).

184 *Buts* 79-80: *Vāḍi pavat asā ātgovvō kalpāntayehi ginnen nāṅgi dumkaṅdak sē, mahā añjanaparvatayak sē, kapa nasnaṭa naṅgā lū mahamēkuḷak sē siṭi āthu, diḷiyena ginnehi tel ōnā sē soḷos kalayak rā povā mat koṭa, kipennaṭa sudusu bas bāṇā, ḍavurasinnaṁ ādiya eka pāhārā ekaviṭa mā selvūha. E keṇehi muhuda diyakaṅda davā genā vaḍabāmukhayen piṭat vā giya avīciyehi ginikaṅdak sē raḷu matāttema soṅda hakuḷuvā mahapoḷova yadaṅḍekin gāsū ghaṇṭāvak sē anurāva devamin, gigurū haṅḍin muḷu nuvara asanipātayak sē tatuṇuvamin, kopayen paya bāṅdalū yadaṁ āda lū keṇehi mā makuḷuhuyak kaḍannā sē yadama biṅdā suṇuvisuṇu keremin, neluṁbudāḷiyak upurannā sē bāṅda lū taṁbaya perāḷī siṭa ānā tutū*

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Next we will compare the above account with the episode below taken from the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa*. In this case, the cast of characters are changed and the scene precedes the conclusive battle of Vijitapura between the army of King Duṭṭugāmuṇu and the Demaḷa (Tamil) army:

> **At that time King Duṭugāmuṇu, having set up camp near Vijitapura and wishing to take that city, in order to test the strength of the Ten Great Warriors,** causing the elephant **Kaḍol** to drink toddy, speaking words suitable to anger him, **having pounded stones on top of his toe-nails,** sounding drums and horns, **sent the elephant off toward the warrior named Nandimitra, who was coming to see him.** At that moment **that elephant Kaḍol,** who was fierce like a column of fire in the Avīci Hell that went out through the Mare's Mouth, burning the mass of the ocean's water, and while making the great earth resound like **a metal dish** that was struck by an iron bar, making it rumble from the sound of his trumpeting, and at the moment in which he yanked his foot angrily, shattering the iron chain **that bound him** as if breaking a spider's thread, having overturned the post to which he was tied as if pulling up a lotus stalk, stomping and breaking it into pieces, striking and pulverizing the elephant stable, having rolled up the post that had been broken, placing it between his tusks, splitting the earth from the stomping when he stomped at his own shadow, running and chasing [people] down , and while lifting and piercing the corpses that he split in two on the tips of his tusks, chasing down cattle and buffalo with a face smeared with blood and with **the tips of his** tusks smeared with blood, piercing and splitting them in two, and while causing the eyes of those who looked to shut from their the entrails, putting his trunk in his mouth, and while shaking his head and roaring, having come **like this,** he entered upon the main road.[185]

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keremin, siṭi āthala pāhārā dhūli keremin, biňdapū taṁbaya kaḍā hakuḷuvā daḷahassehi tabā geṇā, tamāgē sēyaṭa ānālū ānmen mahapoḷova dāduru koṭa, daḷā āviḷā gat pasin bhayaňkara vā, niya akpaharin mahapoḷova kānā, ē pas geṇā piṭaṭa ismin, divā luhubaňdavā alvā paḷāpū minī daḷagā avuṇā naňgamin, leheyen räňdī giya muhuṇin leheyen räňdī giya daḷin gon mīvun luhubaňdavā geṇā ānā paḷamin, ovungē atuṇubahanin veḷī giya daḷin bālubālūvan ās piyavamin, kopayen soňḍa kaṭā lā geṇā hisa salasalā guguramin, doraṭu aṭalu pavuru padanaṁ ānā heḷā suṇuvisuṇu keremin avut vīṭhiyaṭa vādā giyē yā.

185 *SThūp* 134-135: *E samayehi duṭugāmuṇu raja vijitapuraya samīpayehi kaňdavuru bāňda ē puraya gannā kāmativa daśamahayōdhayangē bala vimasanu piṇisa daknaṭa ena nandimitra naṁ yodhayā idiriyaṭa tamangē kaḍolātu rā povā kipennaṭa sudusu bas bāṇa niyapiṭa gal gasā ḍavurasinnaṁ solvā ātu meheyālūha. E keṇehi kaḍolāt muhuda diyakaňda davā genā vaḍabāmuven piṭatva gīya avīciyē ginikaňdak sē raḷuvū ē kaḍolāt mahapoḷova yadaňḍen gasālū lōtaliyak sē anurā devamin gigurū haňḍin tatanavamin kopayen paya āda lū keṇehi makuḷuhuyak kaḍannā sē bāňda lū yadaṁ suṇu visuṇu keremin, neluṁbu dāḷiyak upuṭā gannā sē bāňda lū ṭāṁbaya peralā siṭa āna tutū keremin, āthala pāhāra dhūli*

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The above comparison should suffice to illustrate the creative use of sources in the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa*. Instead of simply translating the account in the Pāli *Thūpavaṃsa* where Kaḍol is made to charge Nandimitra, Parākrama Paṇḍita draws liberally from an analogous story told with reference to the Buddha.[186] In essence, he uses one story of a charging elephant to elaborate upon a different story in his historical narrative. While the Buddha is said to have tamed Nālāgiri with his sweet voice and thoughts of loving kindness, the warrior Nandimitra overpowers Kaḍol with brute strength. Thus, without wanting to draw a direct parallel between Nandimitra and the Buddha, Parākrama Paṇḍita nonetheless appears to have found the account in the *Butsaraṇa* to be vivid and compelling enough to stir the audience of his text. In this way, he exhibits a willingness to compile material from other sources and even different events in order to craft his narrative anew.

Aside from the few identifiable examples where the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* seems to have borrowed from other extant Sinhala sources, we can begin to arrive at a picture of how the author (and/or scribes) used Pāli sources by examining the appearance of quoted material in the text. An important feature of the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* is how few Pāli quotes it inserts directly into its narrative in comparison with the Pāli *Thūpavaṃsa*. Not only

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keremin, biňdi ţāmbaya hakuļuvā daļa assē tabā geṇa tamāgē sēyāvaţa ānalū ānmen ma poļova dāduru keremin diva, luhubaňdavā paļāpū minī daļaga avuṇuvā naňgamin, leheyen rāňdī giya muhuṇin, leheyen rāňdī giya daļaňgin geri mīvun luhubaňdavā āna paļavamin, ovun atuṇu bahanin bālū bālūvan ās piyavamin, kōpayen soňḍa kaţalā hisa salā, guguramin melesin avut vīţhiyaţa vana.

186 See *Thūp* 211: "Thereupon the king, in order to test [his men] to seize Vijitanagara, having seen Nandhimitta coming, released Kaṇḍula on him. Kaṇḍula went forth to take him. At that time, having taken both tusks firmly with his hands, pressing down, [Nandimitta] made it sit on its haunches." Cf. *Mhv* XXV. 21-22 for a similar account.

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does it leave out many of the quotes that appear in the *Thūpavaṃsa*, but in a few instances it presents quotes that are not even found in Vācissara Thera's text. Thus, for instance, the Sinhala text quotes the following Pāli verse that is traditionally recognized as the first speech uttered by the Buddha after his Awakening:

> I passed through many births in *saṃsāra*, seeking but not finding the house-builder. Birth again and again is suffering. Housebuilder, you have now been seen. You will not make an abode [for me] again. All the rafters are broken off, the ridge-pole is destroyed. My mind which has gone away from all material things has attained the destruction of cravings.[187]

Although not found in the Pāli *Thūpavaṃsa*, the above quote appears in verses 153-154 of the *Dhammapada* and is also given in the *Nidānakathā*, which is the likely source for the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* since the quote is given in the context of the same narrative on the life of the Buddha.[188] This instance of intertextuality, along with a few others like it, again signals a readiness in the author to incorporate material that does not appear in Vācissara's text.[189] If the quote does not appear as a result of translation and if its value for the historical

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187 *SThūp* 56: *Aneka jāti saṃsāraṃ sandhāvissaṃ anibbisaṃ,*
gahakārakaṃ gavesanto dukkhā jāti punappunaṃ,
gahakāraka diṭṭho 'sī puna gehaṃ na kāhasī,
abbā te phāsukā bhaggā gahakūṭaṃ visaṅkhitaṃ
visaṅkhāragataṃ cittaṃ taṇhānaṃ khayamajjhagā.

188 See, for example, *Ja-a* I. 73.

189 See also *SThūp* 66, when the narrator describes how the newly awakened Buddha sets forth his first sermon to the five recluses and a vast assembly of deities in the Deer Park near Bārāṇasī. Therein he quotes a Pāli stanza from the "Dhammacakkapavattana Sutta" without giving a Sinhala translation:

> Monks, these two extremes should not be practiced by the recluse. That which is the indulgence in sense-pleasures with regard to the senses, which is low, commonplace, of ordinary folk, ignoble, and unprofitable; and that which is the indulgence in self-mortification while striving, which is painful, ignoble, and not beneficial. Monks, not following both these extremes, the middle path, which is fully realized by the Tathāgata, producing insight, producing knowledge, develops into tranquility, higher knowledge, full-awakening, and Nibbāṇa.

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narrative remains uncertain, there are still other compelling reasons for the author to include this Pāli quote without a corresponding Sinhala gloss. Just as the Pāli *Thūpavaṃsa* makes use of other texts to create and enhance a literary effect, the above Pāli quote in the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* can be viewed as a technique to increase the imaginative potency of the narrative by invoking a notable Pāli stanza that stands apart for being in the language of the ancient Buddhist texts. The Pāli quote adds new material to the Sinhala text, but it serves primarily to enhance rather than explicate the narrative.

Generally speaking, the occasional use of Pāli in medieval Sinhala histories is well attested to in many such works.[190] While in some instances a Pāli quote may be glossed with a translation in the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa*, the fact that such verses and stanzas may be left untranslated is significant since it offers convincing evidence that such sources were used to compose a narrative in Sinhala. The *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa*, however, illustrates that more often than not it simply paraphrases the accounts it takes from its Pāli sources, and the relatively few Pāli quotes it does present are also not cited for their source. In fact, the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* overtly mentions a Pāli source at just three points in its narrative, and even then it gives the account in Sinhala. On the two occasions where it cites the *Mahāvaṃsa*—to describe how three psychic powers contributed to building the relic chamber and to describe the magnificent relic house in the *nāga* world—the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* appears to be

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190 In addition to the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa*, we find the appearance of Pāli verses and stanzas in other texts such as *Sinhala Bodhivaṁśaya*, *Daḷadā Pūjāvaliya*, *Dhātuvaṁśaya*, *Eḷu Attanagalu Vaṁśaya*, and *Nikāya Saṅgrahā*.

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following an account in the Pāli *Thūpavaṃsa* that also cites the *Mahāvaṃsa* by name in its narration of the same episodes.[191]

Moreover, the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa*'s use of Pāli material through direct quotation and paraphrase reveals both a readiness to employ non-canonical sources and to alter the narratives to suit its own tastes. The decision to use a variety of Pāli sources for writing a history in Sinhala suggests that Parākrama Paṇḍita did not view textual authority exclusively in terms of using canonical sources or unaltered quotations. Instead, in the following example where Prince Siddhārtha first confronts Māra, the divine personification of evil, we see that the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* employs the content and form of Pāli verses that are similarly quoted in the *Madhuratthavilāsinī*, the commentary to the *Buddhavaṃsa*, to enhance the effects of its narrative:

> (Sinh): And when [the Bodhisattva] departed from the gate which was opened by the gods, Vasavarti Māra, having come and remaining in the air, interrupted him with this verse, . . .
>
> > (P): 'Do not renounce, Great Hero! On the seventh day from now, the divine gem of a wheel will certainly appear.'
>
> (Sinh): That is, 'Ho! Prince Siddhārtha! On the seventh day from today, the kingdom of a Universal Monarch will appear for you. Rule the world-realm which has been arranged into four great continents, and which is surrounded by two-thousand small islands! Do not go to become a Buddha! Obstacles will befall my four hells. The path there will be lost. When you become a Buddha, on hearing your sermon, the six divine worlds will be filled [with beings reborn there]. Do not go!' Then the Bodhisattva asked, 'Who are you?' 'I am Vasavarti Māra,' he

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191 Cf. *SThūp* 175, 181 with *Thūp* 238, 242. Note that the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* also mentions the *Dīgha Nikāya* when it refers to the account where a deity named Varavāraṇa, upon hearing that the Buddha will be born, begins to string a magnificent garland for making an offering. See *SThūp* 68, *SThūp3* 72, and *SThūp4* 86. *SThūp2* omits the phrase "*dīrgha nikāyehi*" and simply begins with "*ek varavāraṇa naṁ dēvatāvek*" (p. 78). The citation, however, is in error since that story is found in the commentary to the *Dīgha Nikāya*. See *Sv* II. 576-577 and note that the Pāli commentary mentions a plurality of Varavāraṇa deities instead of just one.

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said. Thus having heard the words which were spoken by Māra, my Svāmidaruvō recited these verses:

(P): 'Look! Māra, I know the appearance of your wheel.
I am not a seeker of kingship. Go Māra, do not stay here.
Having caused the entire ten-thousand world-realm to resound,
I will become a Buddha, the great leader in the world.'

(Sinh): That is, 'Māra, I know that your Universal Monarch kingship will appear. I do not desire the kingship of a Universal Monarch. Do not stay, Māra! Having shaken the earth in the ten-thousand world-realms as if shaking your heart with sorrow, I will become a Buddha. Not remaining here, rise and flee,' and having the words which were thus spoken, then Māra said, 'From this point on, I will know if any thought arises in you from thoughts such as lust, etc... You watch your path.'[192]

The above passages convey how intertextual references can function productively to engage the audience of Buddhist history. Parākrama Paṇḍita often employs a set of words or images to trigger certain narrative associations that link the ideas of his text to those in other works for the sake of increasing

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192 *SThūp* 26-27: *Devatāvan haḷa dorin nikma siṭikalhi vaśavarti mārayā avut ākāśayehi siṭa mē gāthāven*

'Mā nikkhama mahāvīra, ito te sattame dine,
dibbantu cakkaratanaṃ addhā pātubhavissati' yi

'Embā, siddhārtha kumārayeni, adaṭa satveni davasa topaṭa cakravarti rājyaya pahaḷa veyi. Dedahasak sodevū pirivara koṭa sataramaṅga divayinin sāduṁ lada sakvaḷa rajaya karava. Budunṭa no yava. Māgē satara apāya akul heyi. Asara nāti veyi. Topa budu vū kala topagē baṇa asā sadevlova pireyi. No yava.' yi vāḷakīya. Ekalhi bōsatāṇō 'Tō kavarehi?' yi vicāḷa sēka. 'Mama vasavarti mārayā vemi' yi kīya. Mesē mārayā kī bas asā māgē svāmidaruvāṇō mē gāthāvan kīha.

'Māra jānāmahaṃ tiṭṭha, tuyhaṃ cakkassa sambhavaṃ,
anatthiko 'haṃ rajjena gaccha tvaṃ māra mā idha.
Sakalaṃ dasasahassampi, lokadhātum ahaṃ pana,
unnadetvā bhavissāmi, buddho loke vināyako' yi,

'Māraya! Mama tāgē cakravarti rājyaya pahaḷavana bava danimi. Cakravarti rājyaya no kāmāttemi. Māraya, no raṅdava! Śokayen tāgē ḷaya vevulannā sē dasa dahasak sakvaḷa poḷova vevulvā budu vemi. Mehi no siṭa tō nāṅgi palāyava' yi vadāḷa bas asā, e saṅda mārayā 'Me tān paṭan gena taṭa kāmādī vitarkayen yaṁ vitarkayak upan naṁ danimi. Tō tāgē hasara balava' yi kīya.

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the impact and memorability of his work.[193] When Sinhala paraphrases are employed in the text, they frequently add material to the Pāli quotes that they serve to gloss. Here for instance we learn why Māra tries to stop Prince Siddhārtha in the first place. That is, beings will be saved from being reborn in the hell-regions by the Buddha and his Teaching. The second paraphrase employs a clever reversal of the common image of the dart of suffering (P: *sokasalla*) lodged in one's heart, a metaphor which is scattered throughout a number of Pāli texts.[194] Yet we should note that such references, such as the following one found in *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, normally imply that one should remove the dart of grief either by oneself or through the aid of a wise counselor:

> When old age has led to the condition of being old, he does not grieve, does not feel distressed, does not lament, does not cry and beat his chest, and does not meet with delusion. This one, monks, is called a learned noble disciple. He has pulled out the poisonous dart of grief by which, pierced, the unlearned, ordinary being only torments oneself. Without grief and whose dart is removed, the noble disciple causes oneself to completely pass away in Nibbāṇa [*attānaṃ yeva parinibbāpeti*].[195]

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193 See also Anne M. Blackburn's unpublished dissertation, "The Play of the Teaching in the Life of the Sasana" (Ph.D. diss., The University of Chicago, 1996) for her discussion on how the narrative associations produced in the commentarial work of the *Sārārthadīpanī* contribute toward sustaining desireable imaginative frameworks for textual interpretation (pp. 166-167).

194 For instance the *Sutta Nipāta* refers to such a dart which is lodged in one's heart (*hadayassitaṃ*) and which must be pulled out for relief (*Sn* 183, vv. 938, 939). With reference to that, the *Mahaniddesa* explains that, "The word 'dart' refers to seven darts—the dart of passion, the dart of ill-will, the dart of delusion, the dart of conceit, the dart of false-views, the dart of grief, and the dart of uncertainty." See *Nidd I* II. 413: *Sallan ti satta sallāni, rāgasallaṃ dosasallaṃ mohasallaṃ mānasallaṃ diṭṭhisallaṃ sokasallaṃ kathaṃkathāsallaṃ.* Also, one episode in the *Petthavatthu* relates how King Vāsudeva praises his brother Ghaṭapaṇḍita for consoling him following the death of the former's son: "Indeed you pulled out my dart, that is grief, which was lodged in my heart. You who dispelled for me, who was afflicted with grief, the grief for a son.' See *Pv* 19: *Abbūḷhaṃ vata me sallaṃ sokaṃ hadayanissitam. Yo me sokaparetassa puttasokaṃ apānudī.*

195 *A.* III. 55: *So jarādhamme jiṇṇe na socati na kilamati na paridevati na urattāḷī kandati na sammohaṃ āpajjati. Ayaṃ vuccati bhikkhave sutavā ariyasāvako. Abbuhi savisaṃ sokasallaṃ yena viddho assutavā puthujjano attānaṃ yeva paritāpeti. Asoko visallo ariyasāvako attānaṃ yeva parinibbāpeti.*

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Yet while Parākrama Paṇḍita clearly draws upon this metaphor of the "dart of grief" from the wider stock of literary imagery, he applies a slightly different focus as to who removes it. That is, while in Jīvaka's mango grove the sorrowful King Ajāsat laments the passing away of the Buddha and he cries out, "O' Svāmidaruvō who has tamed me, having preached the Dharma to me, and having removed the dart, namely grief, in my heart! Having heard a pleasing sermon which was delivered by you Sir, I went to your refuge because you removed grief such as that."[196] By recalling this same notion of grief in the heart, Parākrama Paṇḍita establishes an image that can lead the reader or listener to recall other texts and sermons containing this idea. And by slightly modifying this intertextual reference, our author powerfully suggests that it is the Buddha, rather than ourselves, who removes the "dart of grief." Moreover when we recall the episode of confronting Māra in the Sinhala paraphrase quoted above, we see how the text illustrates that the Buddha is equally capable of disturbing the hearts of evil beings as he is capable of removing the grief from the hearts of others. In either instance, as devotee or heretic, a relationship of dependence on and inferiority to the Buddha is communicated in the narrative by the variation on a single metaphor.

Moreover, while the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* routinely adds material in its glosses on Pāli sources, it even provides evidence suggesting that it altered one of the Pāli quotes that appear in the scene of Siddhārtha's confrontation with Māra. It appears that the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* changes the pronoun and

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196 *SThūp* 76: *Maṭa dharmadēśanā koṭa māgē ḷeyi śoka namāti hīya udurā damāpu svāmidaruvāṇeni mama numba vahansē visin vadāraṇu lābū mihiri baṇa asā, ebaňdu śoka haḷa bāvin numba vahansē gē saraṇa giyemi.*

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thereby transforms the implication of the entire verse. Whereas in the *Madhuratthavilāsinī* and the *Nidānakathā*, the "Wheel" mentioned by Māra is referred to by Siddhārtha as belonging to himself (*mayhaṃ cakkassa*) as if it was his birthright, the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* flips the issue of possession around and attributes the wheel of kingship to Māra himself (*tuyhaṃ cakkassa*) in the dialogue.[197] This single substitution of "your" for "mine" entails a powerful semantic change in the narrative, for it clearly reascribes the position of kingship to that of the realm of the mundane world as symbolized by Māra and concurrently implies that the Buddha, even while he was a *bodhisattva*, has no relation to this sphere whatsoever. The fact that this rhetorical substition of "your" for "my" is done within a Pāli verse quotation would seem to indicate that Parākrama Paṇḍita was willing to emend his source material where he found it conducive to fashioning specific, desireable interpretations of his narrative.[198]

Thus, in comparing the textual production of Buddhist histories in Pāli and Sinhala, our examination of the two versions of the *Thūpavaṃsa* illustrates striking similarities and important differences. First, we might suggest that the general notion of a "text" that consists of material on characters, settings, and

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[197] See *Bv-a* 28; *Ja-a* I. 61 and cf. *SThūp* 27. The other editions of the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* available to me also contain the words "*tuyhaṃ cakkassa*." See, for example, *SThūp*$_2$ 33; *SThūp*$_3$ 27; and *SThūp*$_4$ 37.

[198] Although we cannot rule out the possibility that Parākrama Paṇḍita may have used a text where this change of pronouns had also occurred, I have not seen this change made in other texts where the quote also appears. The extant *Madhuratthavilāsinī* and *Nidānakathā* both use "my wheel," and thus at the very least our author would have had to reject these readings that doubtlessly were in currency at the time he composed his text. Another variant, however, is found in *Bv-a*$_2$ 234, where the line "*jānāmahaṃ maharāja mayhaṃ cakkassa sambhavaṃ*" replaces "*māra jānāmahaṃ mayhaṃ dibbacakkassa sambhavaṃ*." Note that the pronoun "my" (*mayhaṃ*) remains constant.

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events with a fixed structure breaks down when we consider how the form of the narrative can be changed and radically altered in the process of compilation or translation. The Pāli *Thūpavaṃsa*, while ostensibly a revised edition of an earlier chronicle of the same name, actually samples and makes use of many other extant Pāli sources to narrate its story. The narrative of the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* is also constructed out of other sources that are selectively adopted, quoted or paraphrased. This text is clearly not a word for word translation of the Pāli *Thūpavaṃsa*. Rather, it employs its use of Sinhala to construct a text that has compiled, rearranged, and reinterpreted the narratives from other sources as seen, for example, in the lengthy account dealing with the life-story of the Buddha, a section that is comparatively brief in the Pāli version.

The picture we obtain of the production of Buddhist histories in medieval Sri Lanka is one where the identity of a text is only loosely constructed, and the practices of copying, glossing, and emending material taken from a variety of sources is commonplace. Consequently, the structures of post-canonical texts are not inviolable, as sections and chapters were also liable to be extracted and to circulate independently from the work as a whole. Yet, at the same time, the presence of narratives that connect the episodes in the *Thūpavaṃsa*s works to counter the tendency towards their dissolution into separate parts. Indeed, the strongest resemblance between the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s is found in the manner that they organize the material in their respective texts. In short, both texts employ virtually the same plot while variously abridging or elaborating the content of the episodes. The plot is defined here as the story as it is actually told, and that which arranges the

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incidents into a distinct order of presentation.[199] Aside from the obvious connection that is established by the shared name of these two texts, the two *Thūpavaṃsa*s also share a common beginning and ending, as their narratives commence "four incalculables and one hundred-thousand eons ago" with the story of the Bodhisattva Sumedha and conclude with the completion of the Mahāthūpa and the prediction that King Duṭṭhagāmaṇī will become the chief disciple of the future Buddha Maitreya. By incorporating a discernible ending, the two *Thūpavaṃsa*s mirror each other in scope, refusing to extend their accounts up to the time of their composition in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.[200]

Therefore, even though the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s differ in the amount of material they devote to many episodes in their narratives, they tend to organize their material similarly into chapters devoted to the same events. For example, both texts generally discuss the same events in the same sequence, organized around the thematic subject of the Buddha's relics. After beginning with the story of the Bodhisattva Sumedha, the plots of the two *Thūpavaṃsa*s proceed to recount the confirmation of the Bodhisattva's vow by the previous Buddhas and the *thūpa*s (or *dāgāba*s) subsequently built for them, the story of the Buddha with particular emphasis on his death and the distribution of his

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199 For brief but helpful discussions on the "plot," see Eco, *The Role of the Reader*, pp. 27-36, and Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, pp. 43-48.

200 Hayden White, in his highly influential book entitled *Metahistory*, makes a distinction between a "chronicle" and an "historical narrative" based upon the open-ended quality of the former and the sense of closure that accompanies the latter (p. 6). As such, the Pāli and Sinhala are somewhat incorrectly called "chronicles" since they come to an end with the death of King Duṭṭhagāmaṇī in the second century B.C.E. For this reason, I choose to refer to *vaṃsa*s more generally as "histories" rather than chronicles, despite the fact that some of them, such as the *Pūjāvaliya*, deal with events up to the time of their authors.

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relics, the account of King Asoka's discovery of the relic deposit and construction of eighty-four thousand *thūpas*, the account of the establishment of Buddhism in Laṅkādvīpa by the Ven. Mahinda, the account of collecting the collar-bone relic from the god Śakra and enshrining it in the Thūpārāma in Anurādhapura, the story of bringing the Bodhi Tree sapling to Laṅkādvīpa, the account of the battles with the invading Damiḷas and eventual victory over them by King Duṭṭhagāmiṇī, the description of building the Brazen Palace for the monks, the account of acquiring the materials to build the Mahāthūpa, the process of building the Mahāthūpa, the description of the offerings left in the relic chamber, the account of the acquistion and enshrining of the relics, the story of King Duṭṭhagāmiṇī's last days, and finally end with the epilogue that predicts future roles for Duṭṭhāgamiṇī and his family in the retinue of the future Buddha.

The primary differences between the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s may result from the fact that since the former text appears to have utilized Pāli works to compose a Pāli narrative, Vācissara Thera's text generally stays much closer to its sources. Parākrama Paṇḍita, on the other hand, did not only compile material from other sources, he also frequently "translated" it and was therefore enabled to revise and elaborate his text to a much greater extent. If medieval authors composed new Pāli texts by including the direct use of materials found in older texts, the Sinhala compositions appear to have been largely characterized by the indirect use of other Pāli materials that were often

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translated or paraphrased in the Sinhala works.[201] To the extent that a comparison of the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsas* permits some preliminary remarks to be made about the effects of language on textual production, we might simply note here that the Sinhala version consistently elaborates upon its sources with greater detail than what is found in the Pāli text. In other words, the act of "translating" a Pāli account into Sinhala appears to invite one to make more literary embellishments to the narrative than the act of collecting and presenting materials in the same language affords.

This idea can be clearly illustrated by the different manners in which the two *Thūpavaṃsas* present an episode from the story of Siddhārtha. While the Pāli version does appear to add some information that is otherwise not found in the *Madhuratthavilāsinī* or *Jātaka-nidānakathā*, it still exhibits a marked tendency to compile its narrative directly from other sources. We can begin by looking at the account of how Prince Siddhārtha, having just renounced the life of a householder and cut his hair, is furnished with the proper monastic requisites:

> Thereupon the Great Brahmā Ghaṭikāra, who was a past friend in the time of Kassapa Buddha, thought out of friendship that was not lost in their separation during one Buddha-interval: 'Today my friend is going forth in the Great Renunciation. I will go taking the requisites of a monk to him.'
>
> Three robes and a bowl, a razor, needle, belt, and water-strainer, these are the eight things for a monk given to spiritual discipline.
>
> He brought and gave those **eight** requisites for a monk. The Great Person, dressing in the banner of an *arahant*, assuming the best

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201 Charles Hallisey has noted that in the process of composing new Pāli texts, later Theravāda authors frequently made direct use of the materials found in other textual sources. See his "*Nibbānasutta*," p. 104.

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appearance of a recluse, **and saying, 'Channa! Tell my mother and father in my words that I am well,' dismissed him.**[202]

The Pāli *Thūpavaṃsa* copies much of the above account word for word, although modifies the end by omitting the episode concerning the servant Channa and adding an account of the enshrining of Siddhārtha's old garments in a heavenly realm:

> Thereupon the Great Brahmā Ghaṭikāra, who was a past friend in the time of Kassapa Buddha, thought out of friendship that was not lost in their separation during one Buddha-interval: 'Today my friend is going forth in the Great Renunciation. I will go taking the requisites of a monk to him.'
>
> > Three robes and a bowl, a razor, needle, belt, and water-strainer, these are the eight things for a monk given to spiritual discipline.
>
> He brought and gave those requisites for a monk. The Great Person, dressing in the banner of an *arahant*, assuming the best appearance of a recluse, **threw the pair of lay garments into the sky. The Brahmā, having received them, built the "Shrine of Clothes," twelve leagues high and made entirely of precious objects, in the *brahma*-world.**[203]

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202 *Bv-a* 284: *Athassa kassapabuddhakale porāṇasahāyako ghaṭīkāra mahābrahmā ekaṃ buddhantaraṃ vināsabhāvāppattena mittabhāvena cintesi: ajja me sahāyako mahābhinikkhamaṇaṃ nikkhanto samaṇaparikkhāramassa gahetvā gacchāmīti.*

> *Ticīvarañca patto ca vāsi sūci ca bandhanaṃ*
> *parissāvanena aṭṭh' ete yuttayogassa bhikkhuno 'ti.*

Ime aṭṭha samaṇaparikkhāre āharitvā adāsi. Mahāpuriso arahaddhajaṃ nivāsetvā uttamaṃ pabbajjāvesaṃ gaṇhitvā va: channa mama vacena mātupitunnaṃ ārogyaṃ vadehīti vatvā uyyojesi. Cf. *Ja-a* I. 63, for a nearly identical version, albeit slightly less similar to what is is found in the Pāli *Thūpavaṃsa.*

203 *Thūp* 166: *Athassa kassapabuddhakale porāṇasahāyako ghaṭīkāra mahābrahmā ekaṃ buddhantaraṃ vināsabhāva 'ppattena mittabhāvena cintesi, ajja me sahāyako mahābhinikkhamaṇaṃ nikkhanto samaṇaparikkhāram assa gahetvā gacchāmīti.*

> *'Ticīvarañca patto ca vāsi sūci ca bandhanaṃ*
> *parissāvanena aṭṭhete yuttayogassa bhikkhuno'ti.*

Ime samaṇaparikkhāre āharitvā adāsi. Mahāpuriso arahaddhajaṃ nivāsetvā uttamaṃ pabbajjāvesaṃ gaṇhitvā sāṭakayugalaṃ ākāse khipi. Taṃ brahmā paṭiggahetvā brahmaloke dvādasayojanikaṃ sabbaratanamayaṃ dussacetiyam akāsi.

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Clearly, the account of this episode in the Pāli *Thūpavaṃsa* makes direct use of the narrative from the commentary to the *Buddhavaṃsa*. Yet Vācissara Thera edits that account and introduces some new information that is not found in that source.[204] His method of composing as illustrated in the above account displays a reliance on the collect and present mode of production, although his proclivity for copying other sources does not prevent him from refiguring the narrative according to his taste, which in this case works to reemphasize the theme concerning the spread of relics.

Within the same episode from the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa*, Parākrama Paṇḍita displays the wider spectrum of authorial practices that he typically employs to craft his narrative. Indeed, his treatment contains evidence of a paraphrase, a quotation, and the creative elaboration of the account found in the Pāli *Thūpavaṃsa*. The use of Sinhala thus affords a variety of literary practices that results in a narrative that adheres to traditional accounts and yet introduces new comments and descriptions into the story of Siddhārtha's renunciation:

> Thereupon the great Brahmā named Ghaṭīkāra, who was an old friend in the time of the Buddha Kassup, because of the friendship that did not become separated after one Buddha-interval, thinking, ' Today my friend has set off for the Great Renunciation. I will go and take the requisites to him.'
>
> > Three robes and a bowl, a razor, needle, belt, and water-strainer, these are the eight things for a monk given to spiritual discipline.
>
> And having brought the requisites mentioned thus, he gave them to him. Having put on the robes, he threw the two garments that he had worn into the air. Those two garments rose up in the sky as if declaring that,

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[204] The source of the information regarding the "Shrine of Clothes" is unclear to me and is not cited by Jayawickrama in his translation, save for remarking that it is not found in the *Jātaka-nidānakathā* either. It is worth noting, however, that the Sanskrit *Buddhacārita* (VI. 63) mentions that the prince's clothes are taken up to heaven in the midst of what is overall a vastly different narrative account of Siddhārtha's renunciation.

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> 'When he becomes a Buddha, it is in this manner that the beams of his Buddha-rays will radiate.' With clothes that have been worn and discarded by other kings, washer-persons, having put them in their bundle, go away. But the great Brahmā who illuminates the 10,000 world-realms with his ten fingers, having carried the clothes that had been worn and abandoned by my Svāmidaruvō by his head, going away, built a *dāgāba* out of the seven precious materials called the "Jewelled Shrine of the Garments," that had a height of forty-eight *gavus* in the Brahma-world.[205]

The above Sinhala account thus conforms to much of the corresponding account in the Pāli *Thūpavaṃsa*. Yet the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* conspicuously adds some descriptive elements to its narrative. The lay garments that are thrown into the sky are given another layer of interpretive significance, as they are said to represent the marvellous rays that emanate from the Buddha's body. In adding this image to the narrative, the text works to fashion a unique interpretation of the scene and, more specifically, to juxtapose the acts of the Bodhisattva with those of the Buddha. Further, Parākrama Paṇḍita also glosses the description of the Great Brahmā taking away Prince Siddhārtha's old clothes to insert some words of praise intended to elevate the Buddha over other beings. It appears, then, that medieval translations from Pāli to Sinhala typically resulted in either slight or extensive revisions to the form and/or content of the Pāli version, and in this process the text was opened up to more narrative embellishment.

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205 *SThūp* 28: *Ikbiti kasup buḏun samayehi poraṇa yahaḷu vū ghaṭīkāra naṁ mahābrahmayā ek buddhāntarayak venvīṁ bavaṭa nopāmiṇiyā vū mitrabhāvayen, ada māgē yahaḷu tema mahabinikmaṇaṭa nikmuṇēya. Ōhaṭa parīṣkāra gena yannemi yi,*

> *'Ticīvarañca patto ca vāsi sūci ca bandhanaṃ*
> *parissāvanena aṭṭhete yuttayōgassa bhikkhuno'ti.*

yana me kī parīṣkāra genavut dunnēya. Sivuru vālaňda gena hansaḷu deka ākāśayaṭa dāmū sēka. Budu vū kala buduras kaňda nikmennē mē lesaya yi haňgavannāk men ē saḷu deka ākāśayaṭa näňgēya. Sesu rajadaruvan häňda ārapū saḷu radav podiyehi lāgena yannāha. Māgē svāmidaruvāṇan häňda ārapū saḷuva dasaňgillen dasadahasak sakvaḷa āloka karana mahābrahmayā isin piḷigena gos brahmalokayehi. Aṭasāḷis gavuvak usa āti saḷumiṇisā naṁ dāgabak satruvanin keḷeya.

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Our study of the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s has thus far shown that Buddhist histories were conceived and produced as literary works, irrespective of their "real" referents. Indeed, the reality of the *Thūpavaṃsa*s narrative may well have gone unquestioned in medieval Buddhist communities. Yet, a study of these texts provides evidence that the same historical account could be written in starkly different ways. By employing the two modes of collect and present on one hand and translation on the other, medieval Sri Lankan Buddhists produced texts that drew upon other sources and often different languages. The compilation and translation of texts, including *vaṃsa*s, was a complex practice whereby authors negotiated the extent to which their works would imitate older texts and, at the same time, introduce new features therein. Our common assumption that history is by definition a conservative enterprise that seeks to recreate the past as it really was, striving to remain as close to its sources as possible is an entirely inappropriate framework with which to examine Buddhist history-writing in medieval Sri Lanka. The authority of a chronicle was not established by virtue of its close and overt adherence to older sources. Rather, we can infer that the texts were taken to be self-authenticating and appreciated in terms of the effects they were expected to have on their audiences.

Put differently, the *Thūpavaṃsa*s were apparently written with broad, practical concerns in mind. The readiness with which the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s embarked upon editing and emending received narratives points toward a conception of history in which its accounts should be efficacious as well as true. This is clearly seen when one considers the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa*, as it functions like a commentary on the Pāli version by glossing, explaining,

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and enhancing the narrative of the latter. Likewise, the Pāli *Thūpavaṃsa* revises the historical narratives found in its sources, albeit to a considerably lesser extent. The *Thūpavaṃsas* were written as "display texts," that is to say, texts that do not simply report what happened in the past, but also present verbal displays designed to recreate, interpret, and evaluate experiences for a contemporary reader or listener.[206] Rewriting history becomes an exercise in which the text's audience is made to encounter familiar narratives about the Buddha and his relics in a new way. Many scholars have therefore mistaken the detailed specificity of the *vaṃsakathā* as merely the testimony of empirical facts, when such descriptive language instead points to poetic attempts to transform the lives of people in the present.[207] To copy, edit, and/or elaborate upon older historical narratives represent choices for producing different effects in the way that an audience thinks and feels. We might reasonably claim, then, that the textual production of Buddhist histories was governed by efforts to condition or prefigure people's encounters with the texts through rhetorical and aesthetic uses of language in their narratives. It is to these narrative strategies that we will now turn.

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206 Waldman, *Toward a Theory of Historical Narrative*, pp. 18-19.

207 I find Stephen Owen's distinction between literary language and the language of diary or empirical observation particularly helpful in thinking about the fact-filled narratives of Buddhist history in Sri Lanka. In his *Traditional Chinese Poetry and Poetics*, he observes that literary language is supposed to be fundamentally different than the more literal use of language since "its words mean Something Else, something hidden, richer, and infinitely more satisfying" (p. 15). On a somewhat related note, Pollock has argued in his article "The Cosmopolitan Vernacular" that the translocal use of Sanskrit in different South and Southeast Asian polities stemmed from its aesthetic capacities, that is, "its ability to make reality more real—more complex and more beautiful—as evinced by its literary idiom and style" (p. 13).

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CHAPTER THREE

THE RHETORIC OF THE *THŪPAVAṂSAS*

Our study of the extant Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s has thus far shown that their authors (and perhaps editors) copied, adapted, and elaborated upon material from other texts in the course of crafting new narratives to be displayed to an audience for the sake of producing certain effects. In this chapter, we will examine how language is used rhetorically to persuade readers and listeners to view the past in ways wherein they become involved with the story and implicated as persons who have a direct stake in history. The *Thūpavaṃsa*s, in other words, employ rhetorical strategies that encourage readers and listeners to adopt certain perspectives with regard to the past that are promoted in their narratives. In this way, a person is led to interpret those historical narratives as stories that bear directly upon his or her welfare in the present and future. At the same time, the narratives of the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s convey doctrinal instruction in the midst of recounting their episodes, conditioning the ways that their audiences interpret and perform meritorious acts. Although the texts presume to relate what happened in the past, we will see that they are equally concerned with the manners in which their narratives are received in the present.

III.1 THE NARRATIVE FORM OF BUDDHIST HISTORIES

Our consideration of how the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s employ language to persuade an audience to embrace a particular historical consciousness for their own good necessitates an interpretive approach that

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avoids treating histories either as windows to the past as it really was or as ideological propaganda to legitimate the authority of kings and monks. The historical vision advanced by the *Thūpavaṃsa*s relies on persuasion more than mystification and revolves around showing an audience their relationship to history. Thus, instead of reading the *Thūpavaṃsa*s to reconstruct historical facts and social forces from the past, I propose to reconstruct the particular readings and interpretations that the narratives attempt to impose upon an audience. From this perspective, the language and form of historical narratives prefigure the effects that readers and listeners experience in their encounters with the texts. Therefore, while acknowledging that Buddhist histories could be read or heard with various degrees of commitment and comprehension on the part of those who encounter a text, the narratives can still yield clues as to what they were envisioned to accomplish as literary works.

Luis Gómez has recently proposed a similar line of textual interpretation in his study of the Sanskrit and Chinese versions of the *Sukhāvatīvyūha Sūtra*, a Mahāyāna Buddhist text dating from around the third century C.E. Gómez argues therein that before the modern era, many Buddhists would have encountered at least some genres of Buddhist literature with a "literary mind." By this he means that, in contrast to a modern reader whose "literal mind" precludes full participation in the mythical and ritual universes underlying ancient Buddhist texts, premodern readers may well have engaged in the playful re-creation of reality in a manner akin to reading and enjoying poetry.[208] In other words, for Gómez, the composition of the *Sukhāvatīvyūha Sūtra* makes

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208 Luis O. Gómez, *The Land of Bliss: The Paradise of the Buddha of Measureless Light* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1996), p. 52.

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use of images and a structure that mirrors the capacity of poetry to entertain and inspire people, whether or not it accurately represents the reality of the everyday world. As such, he rightly reminds us that one possible method of reading a Buddhist text is to focus upon the story and the literary imagination embodied within it to consider how a particular text can function to fill or shape one's faith, conviction, and religious practice.[209] By taking a Buddhist text as a single literary act, we open up new interpretive possibilities in which a *sūtra* or a *vaṃsa* can be viewed as productive of culture and not simply the result of an abstract, preexistent cultural system.[210] When Buddhist histories are read as works of literature, we make room for the possibility that they were envisioned to have certain effects upon a reader or listener and to bring something new into the world.

In this sense, an argument in favor of an interpretive perspective that stresses the literary aspects and effects of Sri Lankan Buddhist history is also directed at recognizing how Buddhist texts were envisioned to have the capacity to affect their readers and listeners in profound ways. Still, it is necessary to

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209 Gómez, *The Land of Bliss*, pp. 52-53.

210 Often it seems that those of us who do research in South Asian religions are apologetic about how little evidence we can bring to support our theories and explanations surrounding premodern religious life. Our apologies, however, may be misplaced since they imply a position whereby the interpretation of a text is seen to depend upon knowledge of a culture or community taken to be responsible for its creation. In this way, a text is little more than an aritifact of the past and a tool for discovering something more about what is imagined to have lain behind it—e.g., such reified "realities" as an ancient Indian culture. This dubious but very common presumption may in fact hinder rather than help us in interpreting Buddhist texts. On a related note, Gómez makes an illuminating distinction between reading a text based primarily upon features which are inherent to the text itself such as its imagery and its grammatical and narrative structures, and a reading of the text which is informed largely by exegetical material and knowledge which comes from outside of the text. According to him, the scholarly reliance upon later commentarial traditions on the *Sukhāvatīvyūha Sūtra* have delimited a somewhat narrow range of interpretations of this text, conceiving it as a testament to a Buddhism of faith while neglecting aspects in it which appear to promote efforts of self-cultivation. See Gómez, *The Land of Bliss*, pp. 114-115.

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build upon the approach suggested by Gómez above in order to account for the types of readings open to those who possess a literary mind. To begin with, we might attempt to explain how a literary mind was not simply an inherent quality among medieval Buddhists, but rather can refer to a stance that texts themselves attempt to invoke in readers and listeners, and that is supportive of the kinds of readings that actualize its potential effects. Put differently, I seek to further nuance Gómez's approach by arguing that, while premodern Buddhists may have encountered at least some forms of literature with a literal mind, texts like the *Thūpavaṃsa* did work to predispose people to encounter their narratives in ways that enabled them to be transformed. Of course, the precise relationships between text, author, and reader in the making of meaning are among the more contentious debates taking place in the scholarly fields of literature and history. Yet, as we will see below, some of those theories may assist us in developing a framework for looking into how Buddhist *vaṃsa*s were conceived, written, and disseminated to change people's lives for the better.

The failure of most modern interpreters of Sri Lanka's *vaṃsakathā* to recognize a creative potency in the chronicles may likely be due to the fact that they have been relying upon a modernist historiography that sees texts as documents that reflect the reality of the past, but do not effect new realities in the present. Our examination of the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s details how Buddhist history-writing is closely related to the production of fictional narratives in both their composition and effects. While seeking to establish the grounds for taking the *Thūpavaṃsa*s as works of literature that recall past events and transform an audience, we will begin by noting how some theorists

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argue similarly that the genres of fiction and history are blurred in all types of historiographical writing. In other words, we do the medieval chroniclers of Sri Lanka a grave injustice by claiming that their histories are more fanciful, "mythical" (in the pejorative sense of being "made-up") and, it follows, deficient in comparison to the histories written in the modern West.[211] To fault the authors of the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsas* for their poetic flourishes and exaggerations is to overlook the facts that Buddhist histories were not written simply to record past events and, more basically, that history and the past are not the same thing. Keith Jenkins has persuasively argued along this line that "the past" is a series of events and situations that are gone, while "history" is only a discourse made up of stories about the past that inevitably remain a personal construct arising out of the historian's point of view.[212] In the search to reconstruct the past "as it really was," texts are rather narrowly evaluated by the degree to which they seem to accurately and objectively reflect what happened. As a result, however, it appears that we have often misread or misjudged the *vaṃsakathā* in large part because we have confused history for the past.

Late twentieth-century theories from the philosophy of history and literary criticism obviously did not inform Vācissara Thera and Parākrama Paṇḍita when they set about writing the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsas*. I will maintain, however, that such theories can provide some valuable insights that can help us to view Buddhist histories as texts designed to affect the ways that

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[211] Again, see the works of Wilhelm Geiger and G. C. Mendis noted above for an example of how the positive assessments of the historicity of the *vaṃsakathā* have generally been qualified and modern readers warned to be wary of the mythic accretions found in these texts.

[212] Keith Jenkins, *Re-thinking History*, pp. 5-12.

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people felt, thought, and acted in the world. In all likelihood, the actual effects of these texts on thirteenth-century Buddhists in Sri Lanka constitute an irretrievable and irreplaceable gap in our knowledge. Yet we can still examine the langauge and literary forms of the texts themselves, as these may contribute towards an understanding of what Buddhist histories were envisioned to do to an audience of model readers and listeners. In short, if we cannot conclusively reconstruct how these texts were actually received, we can at least examine traces in the *Thūpavaṃsa*s that speak to what they were conceived to do. We can begin to suggest what Buddhist histories might have accomplished once we have considered in detail what went into their narrative composition and how they were structured to produce certain effects. Therefore, while we admittedly cannot posit the precise intentions of the chronicler or the nature of an audience's response with any certainty, a close reading of the text may yet give us some insights into the concerns of authors and scribes, as well as the possible range of responses permitted and conditioned by the text's form and content.[213]

A clear and comprehensive recognition of the significance of the narrative form in history-writing is crucial to any examination of what the

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213 Although the concepts of authorial intention and reader-response are not unproblematic and have both been subjected to criticism, it may be useful to consider the possible relevance that such ideas may have for interpreting the work that the *vaṃsa* literature was equipped to perform on individual Buddhists and their culture at large. With regard to the limits of authorial intention as a useful hermeneutic for interpreting a text, Terry Eagleton reminds us in his *Literary Theory: An Introduction*, 2d edit. (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1996) that deciphering the intention of any author is a difficult endeavor when he writes, "An author's intention is itself a complex 'text', which can be debated, translated and variously interpreted just like any other" (p. 60). In the same work, Eagleton also notes a flaw in the reception theory that underlies the notion of reader-response, by pointing out that literary critics who uphold this view are unable to clearly define what a "text in itself" would be before one responds to it, and thus it becomes impossible to determine how free one is to respond to the text and to "concretize" it with one's interpretations (73).

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Thūpavaṃsas were designed to effect. The narrative as a literary form in historical writing has been shown alternately to give structure and meaning to reality as represented in a text, as well as to involve and transform a reader through his or her encounter with the text. In the former case, the narrative form in a historical text works to supplement and condense empricial reality by both adding and subtracting to it.[214] The past is given meaning and treated allegorically as a story that unfolds so that the succession of events becomes thought of as a chain of events, one leading to another. At the same time, however, only certain events in the past are selected out and inserted into the narrative. Indeed, as Jenkins notes, "One cannot recount more than a fraction of what has occured and no historian's account ever corresponds precisely with the past: the sheer bulk of the past precludes total history."[215] We should of course acknowledge that such conditions in history-writing necessarily lead to a consideration of the historian's bias in selecting out some events and neglecting others for the narrative to be composed. For our purposes, however, it is perhaps more helpful to recognize the fictive quality of historical narratives; that is to say, the narratives of the past are constructed by historians in a manner analagous to an author who uses literary forms to craft a story line.

Probably the most influential theorist who blurs the line between historical and fictional narratives is Hayden White, the historian whose work entitled *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* introduced many scholars to the idea of a "poetics" of history in 1973. Since

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214 Dominick LaCapra, *Rethinking Intellectual History*, p. 30. Cf. Paul Veyne's succinct summary in *Writing History* of the similarity between history and fiction: "Like the novel, history sorts, simplifies, organizes, fits a century into a page," (p. 4).

215 Jenkins, *Re-thinking History*, p. 11.

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then, White has basically argued that history-writing is a poetic act of representation in which the historian employs figurative tropes to create a historical account of the past. The past, as such, is not reconstructed by history, but rather it is reconstituted in the narrative written to describe and explain it. White's focus on language and the form of historical narratives allows us to see how the meaning of history is not derived solely from the content of texts. Rather, the words chosen to represent the objects of historical analysis and the frameworks used to situate these objects in relation to one another have direct and determinative effects on the kinds of historical explanations that are available. In this way, the historian "prefigures" the conceptual field for interpreting the past, establishing the means by which the stuff of the past can be arranged together to be explained.[216] Far from being a given reality excavated from the sources, the "past" assumes its specific, knowable form as a consequence of the parameters established by the discourse of the historian. In short, the possible interpretations of history are predetermined by the way that the historian constructs a story out of the past, creating a structure for an entire set of events that have been selected out and arranged sequentially.

An important corollary to White's work is that, in the end, history-writing does not differ much from fictional writing. Although the task of history is sometimes described as an effort towards "finding," identifying," or "uncovering" the stories that lie buried in the historical record, the historian employs methods of "invention" that closely resemble the way a writer of

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[216] White, *Metahistory*, p. 30. While I have tried to simplify White's multilayered argument, one should still note that he speaks of the "objects" of historical analysis as "lexical, grammatical, and syntactical elements of the [historical] field." For a lucid analysis of White's theory of history-writing, see Jenkins, *On 'What is History?'*.

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fiction is thought to operate.[217] For White, then, a historical detail or "fact" may be a given reality from the past, but its meaning or significance in the narrative is not similarly given:

> The same event can serve as a different kind of element of many different historical stories, depending on the role it is assigned in a specific motific characterization of the set to which it belongs. The death of the king may be a beginning, an ending, or simply a transitional event in three different stories. In the chronicle, this event is simply "there" as an element of a series; it does not "function" as a story element. The historian arranges the events in the chronicle into a hierarchy of significance by assigning events different functions as story elements in such a way as to disclose the formal coherence of a whole set of events considered as a comprehensible process with a discernible beginning, middle, and end.[218]

Thus, in contrast to a chronicle, which is simply a written sequence of events with no formal structure and no culmination or final resolution, a historical narrative employs a plot that arranges events within a larger, metahistorical structure marked by the presence of a clearly defined beginning and ending. For example, although the *Thūpavaṃsa* is often called a "chronicle," it actually resembles more closely a historical "story" as defined by White, since it includes a series of events that were fitted into a narrative structure that begins with the story of Sumedha and concludes with the death of King Duṭṭhagāmaṇī.[219] The two texts contain much more than a series of unrelated events that follow each other in time. Rather, the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s represent texts that construct meaning out of past events through

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217 White, *Metahistory*, pp. 6-7.

218 While, *Metahistory*, p. 7.

219 Collins has rightly noted in this regard that the Theravāda Buddhist *vaṃsa*s actually include examples of both "Chronicle" and "History" forms of representation, since they regularly contain both simple catalogs of events without a formal ending and guiding themes that culminate in a sense of narrative closure. See his *Nirvana and Other Buddhist Felicities*, pp. 255-256.

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linking them with a narrative that serves to impart messages and moral lessons that transcend the unfolding of the story itself.

How then does history manage to create meaning and significance out of a series of events from the past? Both Hayden White and Roland Barthes have offered compelling arguments through which, instead of seeing "reality" in past events for which narratives are supposedly uncovered and retold by the historian, one should look to the forms of discourse employed by historians to tell a story of their own creation. White notes that no set of events is intrinsically tragic, comic, or farcical, but rather it is only by the imposition of a narrative structure reflecting a given story type that endows events with collective meaning.[220] In short, themes and lessons that can frame historical events are invented by historians rather than simply discovered by them. Historical narratives are fictive and comparable to literature in as much as the plots that link the events together are the creations of historians.[221] Similarly, Barthes has described the historian as "not so much a collector of facts as a collector and relator of signifiers; that is to say, he organizes them with the purpose of establishing positive meaning and filling the vacuum of pure, meaningless series."[222] A narrative is therefore not inherently present and waiting to be discovered in the events and situations of history. It does not emerge naturally out of the past, but rather is invented by historians who engage

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220 Hayden White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), p. 44.

221 Hayden White, *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), p. 82.

222 Barthes, "The Discourse of History," p. 16.

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in a practice of relating events and attributing significance to them as links in a narrative chain.

For example, out of the twenty-nine battles mentioned, the authors of the *Thūpavaṃsas* elaborate upon the accounts of the battles at Vijitapura and Anurādhapura, in which the army led by King Duṭṭhagāmaṇī first defeats a large garrison of Damila troops and then goes on to rout the remaining invaders and kill their king.[223] These events bear special mention in the text since they mark, respectively, the turning point in the effort to regain control of the island and the definitive act whereby a contender to the throne is slain. The significance therein is established by the authors who place these events in the context of the story in which the Mahāthūpa is built in honor of the Buddha. If King Eḷāra and the Damiḷas were not defeated, King Duṭṭhagāmaṇī could not have built the *dagāba* in Anurādhapura as was predicted by the Buddha. Without this larger narrative context, those two battles have little, if any, significance in and of themselves. What those events "mean" or "signify" is only seen in relation to the narrative as composed by the authors. The so-called "facts" of the past are not in question, but rather it is how they are related to one another that highlights the creative work of the historian.

The narrative form in history-writing also presents an image of the past that reflects the author's imagination in organizing past events and attributing significance to them. That is to say, historical narratives often depict fictive qualities of coherency and closure in their recollections of the past. The structure supposedly found in historical events is actually an illusionary effect

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223 *Thūp* 211-214; *SThūp* 134-140.

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of the historian assuming the view of a centered consciousness that looks out into the world and sees all of its events and processes coming together to tell a story by themselves.[224] Past events and situations can assume coherence, rather than just remaining random and unrelated, when they are fixed in a narrative that imposes a structure capable of linking them together. By the very nature of the narrative form, the stories that are told of the past emphasize linkages over breaks and ruptures, and therefore histories tend to appear more comprehensible and coherent than the past could have ever been.[225] Likewise, when rendered in the form of a narrative, history can come to an end. According to White, the sense of closure in historical narratives attributes meaning and significance to that which has come before:

> The historical narrative, as against the chronicle, reveals to us a world that is putatively "finished," done with, over, and yet not dissolved, not falling apart. In this world, reality wears the mask of a meaning, the completeness and fullness of which we can only imagine, never experience. Insofar as historical stories can be completed, can be given narrative closure, can be shown to have had a plot all along, they give to reality the odor of the ideal. This is why the plot of a historical narrative is always an embarrassment and has to be presented as "found" in the events rather than put there by narrative techniques.[226]

From this we learn that any resolution given to history—a fiction characteristically present in many historical narratives—functions to structure the past in accordance with overarching themes and moral meanings. When history comes to an end in the narrative, the audience is led to conclude whether or not its characters have met with endings that are appropriate, in one sense or

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224 White, *The Content of the Form*, p. 36.

225 Jenkins, *Re-thinking History*, p. 13. Note that in this section, Jenkins is summarizing an argument made by David Lowenthal in his *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

226 White, *The Content of the Form*, p. 21.

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another, to who they are and how they have lived. Thus, when the *Thūpavaṃsa*s come to a close and King Duṭṭhagāmaṇī dies, his glorious ascension to a divine world and the prediction of his rebirth as the chief disciple of the future Buddha Maitreya serve to endow the entire narrative with the theme that virtuous persons are rewarded with desireable felicities. More generally, the sense of closure in a historical narrative reflects an effort towards assessing the sequences of real events from the past as elements of a moral drama that attributes a larger significance to history than what can be seen in the events taken individually.[227]

The emphasis that White and others have given to the fictive construction of historical narratives is useful for our study since it encourages us to investigate the rhetoric of the *Thūpavaṃsa*s instead of simply repeating the inquiries of previous scholars into their relative truth and accuracy as historical documents. Indeed, my argument that Buddhist history-writing in Sri Lanka was a practice designed to produce real effects in the world begins by noting how these texts were written to create model readers who are more or less liable to interpreting the narratives of history in accordance with the interpretations that the authors and editors wrote into their manuscripts. The Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s—as well as Buddhist histories in general—are important sites from which we can examine how historical narratives condition particular responses through the rhetoric employed to make a story out of the past. Put differently, our task is to examine how the past is described and presented in the narratives of the *Thūpavaṃsa*s to make certain readings and

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227 White, *The Content of the Form*, p. 21.

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transformations more likely to occur in a given audience. The assumption that language is a transparent medium with which to convey the reality of the past fails to consider how the language of history-writing both prefigures and conditions the possible interpretations that are subsequently drawn from historical narratives.[228] The texts of Buddhist history, moreover, allow us to recognize that language does not simply convey meanings that lie hidden in the past, but rather it consistently operates to create expectations and effects that transform a reader or listener of the text.

The idea that historical narratives can have discernible effects on a reader has recently begun to be acknowledged by some historians. Dominick LaCapra, for one, has argued eloquently about how historical texts not only have a "documentary" aspect in that they make references to empirical reality and convey information about it, but they also contain "worklike" aspects that involve critical and transformative acts of commitment, interpretation, and imagination on the part of the reader who encounters and interprets them.[229] A text of history performs work upon a reader by engaging him or her in a dialogue with the narrative, whereby one is led to pose questions and draw conclusions from a given text and, correspondingly, the picture it paints of reality.[230] From this we again hear that the narrative in a historical text does not just represent the past to a reader. Instead, a narrative involves a reader in the act of linking together events and situations from the past into a seemingly coherent story, from which one may then establish patterns of relation and

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228 White, *Tropics of Discourse*, pp. 21-22

229 LaCapra, *Rethinking Intellectual History*, p. 30.

230 LaCapra, *Rethinking Intellectual History*, pp. 30-32.

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significance in the midst of the narrative sequence. As such, like White, LaCapra recognizes that historical narratives work to create something new at the same time that they recall the past. Yet LaCapra goes further than White in emphasizing that those fictively constructed narratives also perform "work" on a reader, altering one's view of reality through representing it in a narrative form.[231]

The attention given to narrative as a form of history-writing in turn begs the question of what comes under a study of rhetoric in the Buddhist *vaṃsakathā*. If we acknowledge the fictive construction of historical narratives, selectively including and emphasizing a limited number of events within a plot invented by the historian, what then constitutes the rhetoric of Buddhist histories? White again offers us a useful starting point when he contrasts two ways that a historian fashions his or her materials into a narrative plot. As a writer of prose discourse, the historian may either make history conform to a "framework of preconceived ideas," such as the Marxist predilection to view history in terms of the struggle of the working classes, or alternatively fashion history to conform to a "preconceived selective point of view" of the sort that the novelist occupies when functioning as the narrator of

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231 White's theory of tropes, for instance, revolves around his insistence that the figurative language (namely, "metaphor," "metonymy," synecdoche," and "irony") used to depict the relations between events in the past reflect culturally resonant modalities for making the unfamiliar past a familiar object of understanding. White, in this way, seems to posit a kind of structural affinity between the chosen narrative plots and the preconceptions of historians who write them by virtue of a select number of culturally endowed processes for making sense out of human events. See, for instance, his *Tropics of Discourse*, pp. 86-89. The value of White's theory is that it focuses attention on the manner in which histories are written and points out that historians tend to construct plots that are to a great extent predetermined by the language they use and the ideologies to which they subscribe. However, he does not give much consideration to the creative effects of the narrative form on the audience of an historical text.

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a story.[232] In the former case, the rhetoric of history becomes symptomatic of particular ideologies that are discernible between the lines of Buddhist histories yet, at the same time, are designed to operate outside of texts by legitimating various social and political paradigms presented therein. That view has clearly prevailed in modern scholarship on the *vaṃsa*s. We have already noted, for example, that the renowned German Buddhologist Heinz Bechert has stated that the "Ceylonese chronicles" offer evidence of how the notions of state and Sangha were unified by an historiographical motive to link a concept of national identity with a corresponding religious identity, that is, to construct a Sinhalese Buddhist identity.[233] Consequently, for Bechert, the study of the rhetoric of Buddhist history is properly concerned with highlighting how the monkish authors of the chronicles propagated a vision that secures a place for Buddhism in the governance of the island as a whole. The framework of preconceived ideas Bechert "finds" in the *vaṃsa*s thus revolves around the attempt to legitimate the activity of monks in political spheres.

A similar interpretation of Buddhist histories has been recently proposed by the anthropologist David Scott. In the context of what is, on the whole, a convincing theoretical and ethnographic study on the study and practice of *yaktovil* healing rituals, Scott presents the view that the narrative of the *Mahāvaṃsa* illustrates a rhetorical strategy whereby an intrinsic connection is inscribed between Buddhism and state power.[234] By focusing on the episode

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232 White, *Tropics of Discourse*, p. 106.

233 Bechert, "The Beginnings of Buddhist Historiography," p. 7.

234 David Scott, *Formations of Ritual: Colonial and Anthropological Discourses on the Sinhala Yaktovil* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), p. 193.

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where the Buddha is said to have first visited Sri Lanka and dispelled the *yakṣas* (malevolent, "demonic" beings) from the island, Scott relates how Buddhist histories incorporate a fable that juxtaposes the establishment of Buddhism in the island with the rise and stabilization of a political order.[235] Thus, Scott's approach complements Bechert's in as much as he reads the narratives of the *vaṃsas* as evincing and promoting a political ideology that integrated Sangha and state. Furthermore, Scott locates the impetus of historical rhetoric in a discursive attempt to authorize Buddhism as the true religion of the Sinhalas and, like Bechert, identifies Buddhist histories as a mechanism that linked the Buddha's doctrine with an expansionist ideology of statecraft.[236] Yet, whereas Bechert describes the motivation of Buddhist history-writing in terms of a monkish conservatism seeking to unify and maintain the political power of Theravāda institutions, Scott instead emphasizes that the *vaṃsas* functioned at a deeper level to make the connection between Sinhala people and Buddhism appear natural and self-evident, displacing any competing discourses that might challenge the pronouncements made by the chronicles on what and who qualifies as "Buddhist."

Scott's argument on the rhetorical function of the discourses of Buddhist history in Sri Lanka is stimulating and does offer a new direction through which scholars can study the constructed nature of Buddhist identity. His concerns, which are manifestly clear, reflect an attempt to reconceive the problem of distinguishing what is "orthodox" and what is "heterodox" in Buddhism, so

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235 Scott, *Formations of Ritual*, pp. 193-195.

236 Scott, *Formations of Ritual*, p. 195.

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not to replicate colonial and Orientalist assumptions on what can rightfully be called "Buddhist" among the beliefs and practices of Sri Lankans. He is also mindful of the uses that such historiographical discourses taken from the *vaṃsa*s have in legitimating a modern form of ethnic politics that "seeks to guarantee the claim that the island of Lankā is exclusively the land of the Sinhalas and of the Buddha's *dhamma*."[237] Yet we might ask what is obscured by the prevailing scholarly focus on a monolithic ideology—that is, a framework of preconceived ideas—allegedly found in Buddhist history-writing? Is the rhetoric of the Buddhist chronicles limited only to legitimating political institutions and to establishing an unquestionable dominance of the Buddhist religion in the island of Sri Lanka?

It is at this point that LaCapra's discussion of the "work" that historical texts perform upon a reader offers us with an alternative perspective from which to view the rhetoric of Buddhist history. I suggest that we examine the grammatical and figurative language employed throughout the *Thūpavaṃsa*s to arrive at a preliminary evaluation of how Buddhist histories use rhetoric to create good readers and listeners. Rather than assuming that rhetoric reveals social and political ideologies motivating Buddhist history-writing, in this chapter I will demonstrate how language is used in the *Thūpavaṃsa*s to give rise to certain habits of thought and a general angle of vision through which readers and listeners of Buddhist histories are located with respect to what

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237 Scott, *Formations of Ritual*, p. 195. Indeed the theme of Buddhist histories as political and ideological instruments in modern Sri Lankan life has been presented and critically assessed by other scholars as well. Perhaps the most notable in this regard is Stanley Tambiah's controversial book *Buddhism Betrayed?*.

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happened in the past.[238] Rhetoric, in this sense, is inextricably linked with the emplotment of past events into a coherent story-line that creates expectations in the audience and makes certain interpretations of history more likely than others. It is preferable to read the *Thūpavaṃsas* as literary works containing narratives that express similarly preconceived points of view towards the past. In this way, rhetoric acts to construct a meaningful plot with which to link a series of otherwise unique events and to prefigure how the narrative will be generally received.

While the fact that Sri Lankan Buddhist histories have been put to political uses in the past and present is unquestionable, this conclusion illustrates the multiple uses of the *vaṃsas* in specific historical circumstances more than it illumines the motives of history-writing itself. Indeed, as we saw in chapter two above, the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* effectively rewrites the Duṭṭhagāmaṇī episode as found in the *Mahāvaṃsa*, transforming an absolution for killing beastly Tamil invaders into a thoughtful ethical observation on the power of merit stored up from prior good deeds. Likewise, the story of the Buddha's first visit to Sri Lanka and his dispelling of the *yakṣa* inhabitants has been reinterpreted by several medieval chronicles. We will see how the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* treats this episode in the next chapter, but for comparative purposes we may note a brief but highly significant comment on this event found in the *Daḷadā Pūjāvaliya*. The narrator in this fourteenth-century text

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238 I am borrowing the term "habits of thought" from Anne Blackburn, who makes reference to this notion in her dissertation, "The Play of the Teaching in the Life of the Sasana." To my mind, this idea is useful for highlighting how texts may predispose persons toward generally defined patterns of thinking in response to what they encounter in the narratives of Buddhist history.

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recounts how the Buddha called upon Śakra, the King of the Gods, to protect the island that "he procured . . . with great effort," implying that the Buddha took pains to obtain Sri Lanka for the sake of its later inhabitants.[239] Similarly, the Sinhala *Dhātuvaṁśaya*, which can also be dated around the fourteenth century, stresses that the Buddha first went to Sri Lanka for the sake of prosperity for the island and later brought forth an island for the *yakṣa*s to seek refuge since he is a "store of compassion."[240] Such episodes may be ideologically charged, but it does not necessarily follow that they reveal a singular underlying motive for medieval Buddhist history-writing. Indeed, as we will see, it is critical that one interprets singular episodes in terms of the overall narrative plot. Accordingly, we will proceed to examine how rhetoric in the *Thūpavaṃsa*s is used to prefigure specific manners of reading and understanding history in an audience.

III.2 BUDDHIST HISTORY AS LITERATURE

When considering the rhetoric of Buddhist history-writing, we can choose whether to take it as a characteristic reflecting the contextual background

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239 *DlPjv* 17: *Mahotsāhayen tanāgat laṅkāva raknā parriden dasadahasak sakvalin rāsvū devibaṁbun aturehi siṭi sak devrajahu samīpayaṭa kāṅdavā.* This brief remark in the text seems to underline the emphasis in history-writing on making audiences feel grateful for the past, a point that I draw out at length in chapters four and five. Also note that in his *Siṅhala Sāhityaya Vaṁśaya*, Sannasgala gives the dates of composition for this text as between 1325-1333 (p. 249). Godakumbura, on the other hand, points out that a king mentioned therein likely refers to Bhuvanēkabāhu V of Gampola, who reigned between 1375-1391. See his *Sinhalese Literature*, p. 115.

240 *SDhātv* 35: *Śrī laṅkādvīpayaṭa abhivṛddhi piṇisa vāḍi sēka....Karuṇānidhāna vū apa tilōguru budurajāṇan vahansē maraṇabhayaprāpta vū yakṣayanṭa taman vahansēgē ṛddhyanubhāvayen giridivayina genahāra.* On the dating of this text, Kulasuriya suggests that it may belong to the fourteenth century since several other chronicles were likewise written in Sinhala prose at that time. See his *Siṅhala Sāhityaya III* (Dehiwala, Sri Lanka: Śrīdevī Printers, 1996), p. 166.

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of the author or as an aspect that actively contributes to the use and work of a text. Up till now, scholars have generally concluded that the *vaṃsakathā* are polemical works that are best read as tools of legitimation for structures of political power and for advancing the interests of one monastic lineage over its competitors. It is clear that such interpretations of Buddhist history represent a value judgment whereby establishing a historical context prior to the text is held to be necessary for making sense of it. A chronicle like the *Thūpavaṃsa* can, for example, be read as a "charter" for legitimating Buddhist nationalism once one posits that the Sangha and king were institutions for which mythic justifications were desireable or necessary. Along those lines, one scholar has argued that the Buddha's conquest of the *yakṣa*s during his first visit to Laṅkā is an "archetypal gesture of Sinhalese kingship" wherein order is equated with Buddhism and a claim for the Sinhalese rule of the island is definitively established.[241] Such an argument is possible, of course, but we should note that the above interpretation of Buddhist histories begins with a premise about the workings of kingship and proceeds to read the *Thūpavaṃsa* and other texts in the light of that preconceived contextual hypothesis.

Yet, we might fairly ask whether that deduction is as self-evident as its proponents would have it. In this regard, LaCapra has noted that the appeal to "context" constitutes another form of historiographical rhetoric whereby texts are made into "little more than a sign of the times or a straightforward expression of one larger phenomenon or another."[242] From this we learn that

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241 Alice Greenwald, "The Relic on the Spear," p. 23.

242 LaCapra, *Rethinking Intellectual History*, p. 14.

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the context of a text can be a somewhat oversimplified scholarly construct. When we try to arrive at the historical context (as if it could be taken in the singular) of the *vaṃsakathā*, we encounter a problem directly related to the fictive reconstruction of historical narratives. The context upon which an interpretation can be based is, like the plot, something that is as much invented as found by the historian. Any historical context that is presumed to exist behind and prior to a given text constitutes an abstract image of the "real past" that is itself created and synthesized by the historian out of readings from various other texts.[243] Thus, our knowledge of the medieval Sri Lankan context for the *Thūpavaṃsa*s has been arrived at primarily through readings of other literary, epigraphical, and archeological "texts," the real referents of which are no less imaginatively constructed by the scholar. Indeed, any appeal to the "context" of a text as a guide to interpreting the latter is a deceptive solution since in fact there is never a single context that is invariable and stands alone to unlock the meaning of a text.[244] The past reconstructed in history is a very selective one, so it stands to reason that any historical context must be equally partial and incomplete.

The basis for interpreting the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s might therefore be profitably shifted towards the form and content of the narratives within the texts themselves. Indeed, a number of scholars have more recently

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[243] In *The Content of the Form*, White addresses the problematic nature of the text-context relationship by questioning the reality of that to which the language of a text refers. Thus, on the referents of history, he writes, "The historically real, the past real, is that to which I can be referred only by way of an artifiact that is textual in nature. The indexical, iconic, and symbolic notions of language, and therefore of texts obscure the nature of this indirect referentiality and hold out the possibility of (feign) direct referentiality, create the illusion that there is a past out there that is directly reflected in the texts" (p. 209).

[244] LaCapra, *Rethinking Intellectual History*, p. 35.

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stressed the need to pay attention to the mechanics of texts themselves when one attempts to construct an interpretation. The insights of critical theory have led some historians to consider seriously the problem of sorting out what is relevant for establishing a historical context for reading a text.[245] In response, it may be useful to reverse the direction of thinking and view texts as contextualizing the cultural lives of medieval Sri Lankan Buddhists. If we read the *Thūpavaṃsa*s as literary works, then the focus of our interpretation falls upon what the rhetoric of Buddhist history is designed to effect and accomplish in an audience. Instead of reading the *Thūpavaṃsa*s in terms of what we imagine to have been the historical environment in thirteenth-century Sri Lanka, we can look directly at what kinds of readings the texts themselves prefigure. Thus, when we choose to read Buddhist history as literature, we give equal consideration to "myths" and "legends" as elements that have found their way into the narrative not because the chroniclers had a flawed and inferior sense of history, but rather because they were presented to condition specific responses among readers and listeners.

A study of the rhetoric in Buddhist history as a literary form draws attention to the relationships established between texts and their readers and listeners. In this interpretive perspective, texts work to prefigure specific readings and experiences in an audience through the skillful use of language. Rather than simply reflecting the ideological stances of their authors, Buddhist histories may be seen to employ various rhetorical strategies to create good

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[245] For a fine overview of the new issues challenging historians today, see Janet Levarie Smarr's "Introduction" in *Historical Criticisim and the Challenge of Theory*, ed. Janet Levarie Smarr (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993): 1-21.

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"readers" who, by definition, cooperate with the narrative structure of the text and arrive at interpretations that are consistent with the values and ideas expressed within. The idealized reader foreseen in the production and expression of a text is the potential recipient of the narrative charged with the task of following the story as it was written. Umberto Eco refers to this possible reader as the "model reader," a future and imagined respondent to the narrative who is at once presupposed and created by the text.[246] Literary works, in this view, are "lazy machines" that require the reader to make choices of interpretation and to fill in the gaps of a text by forming expectations and drawing conclusions where encouraged by the narrative.[247] Eco's model reader represents the person for whom the text was written in general, and as such it is a figure conditioned by the narrative to follow the clues or commands in the discourse of the text in order to participate in a reading that is more or less in accordance with how the text was designed to have been read.

In as much as the rhetoric of a text determines the subsequent comprehension and experience of its narrative, model readers are imagined to collaborate with the narratives of texts on the latter's terms. Although Eco has

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246 Eco, *The Role of the Reader*, pp. 7-8. Note that other literary critics, including Wolfgang Iser, use the term "implied reader" to designate the reader who is anticpated by the text. In his study of the effects of prose fiction on an audience, Iser argues that the implied reader refers to both the prestructuring of the potential meaning(s) by the text and the reader's actualization of this potential in the process of reading. See his *The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), p. xii. Elsewhere, Iser elaborates on how the implied reader, as the subject anticipated in the structure of the text, actively works to fashion the meaning provided by the text in accordance with his or her imagination and store of experience that give rise to individually tailored mental images. See his follow-up work entitled *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), pp. 34-38.

247 Umberto Eco, *Six Walks in the Fictional Woods* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994), pp. 3-6.

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made an important distinction between "closed" works such as Superman comic strips that prefigure precise interpretations within a rather narrow range of possibilities and "open" works such as Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* that appear to revel in ambiguity and a willingness to allow the reader to come up with multiple interpretations from a single work, he points out that both kinds of works prefigure particular uses and manners of reading.[248] In other words, even an open work makes demands upon a reader to respond appropriately, if creatively and variously, to its narrative. A "good" reader can thus be thought of as one who accedes to the rhetorical demands of a text and successfully arrives at the interpretation(s) implied therein. A text's persuasive power is thus located in its use of language and the structual elements that together make up its narrative. The model reader is an individual who is encouraged to follow and comprehend the story or, put differently, the site on which a text does its work.

The theory of the model reader is not only useful for locating a preconceived point of view in the narrative of a text, but it also resonates with a vision of the audience that is found in Buddhist histories themselves. The *vaṃsakathā* characteristically address an imagined audience of readers or listeners with invocations and benedictions that vector outwards from the story to include an audience that is contemporary to a given reading or recital. The existence of the readers and listeners is typically acknowledged within the narratives of Buddhist histories and, as such, there is evidence of an explicit awareness of and concern for the audiences of texts by authors and editors. In the opening verses of the Pāli *Thūpavaṃsa*, for example, the narrator addresses

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248 Eco, *The Role of the Reader*, pp. 8-10.

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the audience directly with a verb that translates as "Listen, all of you!" Thus, while affirming piety and explaining why this particular text was written anew, the narrator states, "Listen, all you good people to the chronicle of the relic shrine of the Teacher that is complete, unconfused, and well-recited by me."[249] Putting the verb in the form of the second-person plural clearly anticipates an audience of more than one for the text. Even further, we notice that the audience has been prefigured from the start. Those who are listening to the *Thūpavaṃsa*'s recital are described as "good people" (P: *sādhavo*), or persons who are at least virtuous or fortunate enough to find themselves in an audience for whom the text is being read.

While the text anticipates an audience, it also anticipates that it will comprise persons who are morally good. Yet it would be a mistake, I think, to assume that the virtue of readers and listeners is preexistent and simply taken for granted. Moreover, at the same time, such an invocation does more than simply flatter an audience and make them more pliable to being persuaded of the religious vision presented in the text. To call those in the audience "good people" or "virtuous persons" (P: *sappurisa*; Sinh: *satpuruṣa*) reflects an expectation of what the readers and listeners will become after encountering the text. People are therefore not simply inherently good, but they are envisioned to be made virtuous by reading or listening to the text. The *Thūpavaṃsa*s display a recognition that people who come into contact with their narratives are ethically transformed by virtue of the fact that they are part of the audience.[250]

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249 *Thūp* 147: *Sunātha sādhavo sabbe paripuṇṇam anākulaṃ/ vuccamānaṃ mayā sādhu vaṃsaṃ thūpassa satthuno' ti.*

250 See, for example, *Thūp* 195-196, where thousands of beings who are preached to by Mahinda during his first seven days on the island are said to have attained the fruit of the

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Thus, in its opening lines, the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* suggests that "virtuous persons" are chiefly characterized by their act of listening to the narrative of the text:

> I will describe the shrine named Ratnamāli, shining with various jewels and wherein are enshrined about a bushel of the venerable relics of that Buddha, who was endowed with compassion which was endless and was knowledgeable with knowledges such as the Sixfold Incomparable Knowledge, the Fourfold Confident Knowledge, and the unshakeable knowledge in the presence of the eight audiences, who was confident, and who, if there were any avenue of disputation, he would overcome it, and who was like a lamp that was raised to the Three Worlds, who has tamed beings such as Ālavaka, Aṅgulimāla, Suciroma, and Khararoma, who were violent, rough, wrathful, and unable to be tamed by anyone, and who was endowed with all virtuous qualities which were unlimited, incomparable, and undescribable. May that description of the Ruvanmāli Dāgāba that I shall describe be heard by virtuous persons [*satpuruṣayan*] turning their ears in my direction attentively and unwaveringly [to hear it].[251]

By addressing the audience of the text in this manner the narrative anticipates a listening audience that will become situated in a relationship of reverence to the Buddha and the Ruvanväli Dāgāba (that is, the Mahāthūpa). This relationship is effected primarily through the engagement with the narrative of the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* as it is read or recited to an audience. The audience that is then formed through an encounter with the text becomes a community of virtuous

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"Stream-enterer" (P: *sottāpattiphala*). Since there is no mention of anyone failing to attain that condition, the text leaves the impression that everyone in those audiences were transformed and achieved penetrating insight into the Dhamma. I would argue that such accounts create the expectation that to be in an audience where a *sutta* or text is recited means that one will accrue certain benefits merely by that fact alone.

251 *SThūp* 1: *Ananta vū karuṇāven hā ṣaḍ asādhāraṇajñānayen da caturvaiśāradyajñānayen hā aṣṭaparṣadhi akampyajñānayen da yanādi jñānayen jñānavat vū viśārada vū siyalu vādapathayek āt naṁ māḍa siṭiyā vū bhuvanatrayaṭa nāñgū pahanak vāni vū kāt visin vinayanaya no kaṭa hāki vū caṇḍa vū paruṣa vū sāhasika vū ālavaka, aṅgulimāla, suciroma, khararomādīn vinayanaya koṭa vadāḷā vū siyalu aparimita vū atulya vū avācya vū guṇayen yukta vū ē budurajāṇan vahansēgē biṁbak pamaṇa dhātunvahansē nidhāna kaḷa noyek ratnayen ujjvalita vū ratnamāli naṁ caityaya varṇanā keremi. Mā kiyana ē ruvanväli dāgāb varṇanāva satpuruṣayan visin sāvadhānava avikṣiptava mā disāvaṭa kan namā āsuva mānavi.*

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persons by means of gathering together and listening to its recitation. In other words one's very presence in an audience of listeners effectively ascribes the identity of "*satpuruṣa*" upon an individual, who moreover exists in the midst of other "virtuous persons" who make up the audience at that moment in time.

The model readers and listeners of Buddhist histories are not merely implied by the narrative, they are explicitly acknowledged in the texts themselves. The rhetoric of the *Thūpavaṃsa*s assumes the role of involving the audience in the narrative and establishing its members in a direct relationship with past actors and events. Having been anticipated in the narrative, competent readers and listeners who engage with the text on its own rhetorical terms are also created or fashioned by it in the course of following the narrative. The competency that may be presumed in an audience of medieval Buddhist devotees who are familiar with the basic outlines of ancient Sri Lankan history is at the same time supplemented by the narratives of Buddhist histories. The rhetoric found in the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s affords us with examples of how histories work to incorporate contemporary audiences into the narrative, instill in them a particular stance towards the past, and give them directions for using the texts. In this way, we can begin to map out how model readers and listeners are prefigured in texts like the *Thūpavaṃsa*s and, in turn, we can detect what the texts see themselves doing to their potential audiences.

As literary texts written to affect an audience in various ways, the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s employ strategies to involve its readers and listeners in the story as it is told. The narratives periodically imply that the distinction between an audience *in* the text and an audience *of* the text can easily be

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collapsed. Using first-person grammatical forms such as "our" (P: *amhākaṃ*; Sinh: *apagē*) within the narratives, these texts work to insert their readers and listeners into the perspective occupied by the narrator. As we have seen, the audience is at times directly addressed in Buddhist histories, yet more often it is implicitly linked to the Buddha and other venerable monastics through various mechanisms present in the narrative. In other words, the *vaṃsakathā* effect a shift from "you" who are reading or listening to "we" who collectively share in relationships with historical figures. At the same time distinctions between the past and present are also blurred in order to make historical narratives impinge upon contemporary readers and listeners of the texts.

A literary reading of the *Thūpavaṃsa*s helps us see how the narratives are constructed to communicate with an audience that, in turn, must respond to what is being expressed with interpretations that fill in the gaps of what is only implied or what goes unmentioned in the texts themselves.[252] In this way, we may understand the rhetoric of Buddhist history as analogous to that which is found in fictional narratives more generally. It has been said that in fiction, rhetoric guides readers and listeners to participate in the production of meaning that is prefigured in the text.[253]. The *Thūpavaṃsa*s display similar efforts directed at shaping the encounters of readers and listeners with their narratives. For instance, the Pāli version repeatedly depicts the Buddha Gotama as "our Buddha," and thus suggests that those in the audience of the text are implicitly included in the relationship between the Buddha and devotees that is laid out in

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252 Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, p. 28.

253 Iser, *The Implied Reader*, p. 30. Iser, however, points out that the reader controls his or her responses to the text so that the choice and manner of accepting one's prescribed role as a reader is ultimately left up to him or her (p. 55).

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the narrative. In the scene where the brahmin Doṇa speaks out and pacifies the kings who are set to fight over the Buddha's relics, the Pāli text appears to copy much of the commentary found in *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī*. Yet while providing the commentary's glosses for Doṇa's speech, the Pāli *Thūpavaṃsa* adds the first person pronoun "our" to qualify the earlier text's conclusion that the Buddha was an advocate of forgiveness. Specifically, the commentary notes that "how much more so now that he attained this such characteristic towards what is pleasant and impleasant, the Buddha was in every way an advocate of forbearance."[254] The *Thūpavaṃsa*, on the other hand, states "how much more so now that he attained this such characteristic towards what is pleasant and impleasant, *our* Buddha was in every way an advocate of forbearance."[255] At first glance, such an emendation might appear somewhat insignificant. I would argue, however, that substituting the word "our" for "the" signifies a larger trend in the *Thūpavaṃsa* toward shrinking the gap between the audience implied in the text and those persons who read and listen to it.

Again, in the *Thūpavaṃsa*'s account of the arrival of the Bodhi Tree in Sri Lanka, the audience of the text is brought rhetorically into an association with the Buddha Gotama. The narrative contrasts the visits of previous Buddhas to the island with the visit of Gotama and, at the same time, suggests that contemporary readers and listeners stand to benefit equally from his actions in the past. The Venerable Mahinda thus addresses King Devānampiyatissa, "a Bodhi Tree from among the three previous Fully-Enlightened Buddhas was

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254 *Sv* 608: *Kim aṅga pana etarahi iṭṭhāniṭṭhesu tādilakkhaṇaṃ patto sabbathā pi buddho khantivādo ahosi.*

255 *Thūp* 177: *Kim aṅga pana etarahi iṭṭhāniṭṭhesu tādilakkhaṇaṃ patto sabbathā pi amhākaṃ buddho khantivādo ahosi* (emphasis mine).

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established in this island. The Bodhi Tree of our Buddha, emitting a network of attractive rays, should also be established."[256] In speaking of the three previous Buddhas, that statement refers to a belief that long before Gotama Buddha attained Enlightenment, the Buddhas named Kakusandha, Konāgamana, and Kassapa also visited the island now known as Laṅkā and established the Buddhist Dispensation there after it had disappeared.[257] What the remark implies then is that while the Bodhi Trees of previous Buddhas were established in this island for others much earlier in the past, the Buddha Gotama's tree should be established for *us* since he is, after all, *our* Buddha. Those beings who appeared in the world while Gotama Buddha was living and those who have appeared since are said to have lived or live during the Dispensation of Gotama Buddha. Thus, by reaffirming that Gotama is "our Buddha," the *Thūpavaṃsa* makes a strong argument that contemporary readers and listeners also stand in a relationship to that Buddha along with his monastic and lay devotees from the past who are mentioned in the narrative.

The *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa*, not surprisingly, also picks up the tendency to extend the audience in the narrative to include its readers and listeners. For example, it routinely refers to the Buddha as either "my Svāmidaru" or "our Svāmidaru," a Sinhala honorific title that is largely untranslatable, yet conveys a sense of dependence and intimacy.[258] Likewise, the Buddha-to-be is repeatedly

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256 *Thūp* 201: *Imasmiñ ca dīpe purimakānañ ca tiṇṇaṃ sammāsambuddhānaṃ bodhi patiṭṭhāsi. Amhākaṃ pi bhagavato sarasaraṃsijālavissajjanakena bodhinā patiṭṭhātabbaṃ.*

257 The *Buddhavaṃsa* and its commentary called the *Maduratthavilāsinī* present early, detailed accounts of the Buddhas who were said to have lived prior to Gotama Buddha. See also *Dīp* XV. 34-64, in which Mahinda recalls the stories of how Kakusandha, Konāgamana, and Kassapa visited islands which corresponded previously with Laṅkā at length.

258 See, for instance, *SThūp* 16, 20, 165. I wish to acknowledge Prof. W. S. Karunatillake and Prof. G. D. Wijayawardhana for their helpful remarks on the term "*svāmidaruvō*." It is

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called "our Bodhisattva" while the text recalls his various births in the past where he obtained the prediction confirming his future Buddhahood by previous Buddhas.[259] By retelling the story in the first-person, so to speak, the history of the Buddha's efforts to cultivate the Ten Perfections of a *bodhisattva* and to rescue all beings from the "ocean" of *saṃsāra* is depicted as a history that directly affects "us." We can see the tendency to make the narrative of the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* increasingly involve contemporary readers when we compare its account of the veneration of the monk Mahasup (P: Mahākassapa) at the funeral pyre of the Buddha with the description in the Pāli version. The relation of the audience to that great monk is left somewhat ambiguous in the latter text, as the words "Our Thera who is dear to us" (*amhākaṃ kulūpagathera*) are put in the mouths of the deities who seek to facilitate his worship of the Buddha before he is cremated.[260] It is therefore unclear whether or not the reader or listener is expected to position him or herself in relation to that esteemed monk and master of disciplinary observances.[261]

In contrast, the narrative in the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* depicts the Thera as a great being whose existence in history carries direct ramifications for a

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quite possible that this epithet helps to define a particular relationship wherein one understands oneself to be a patient and a child of the Buddha.

259 See, for instance, *SThūp* 10-16.

260 The *Thūpavaṃsa*'s account reads thus, "And at that time, the deities who were reborn in heaven, having aroused serene joy in their minds toward the Thera [Mahakassapa], [but] not seeing the Thera at the convocation, thinking, "Indeed, where is the Thera who is dear to us?," and seeing that he had entered the path on the way, resolved that, 'the pyre should not burn when the Thera who is dear to us has not honored it." See *Thūp* 171: *Tena kho pana samayena there cittaṃ pasādetvā sagge nibbattā devatā tasmiṃ samāgame theram adisvā, kuhin nu kho amhākaṃ kulūpagathero 'ti āvajjantā antarāmaggapaṭipannaṃ disvā, amhākaṃ kulūpagathere avandite citako mā pajjalitthā 'ti adhiṭṭhahiṃsu.*

261 The monk Mahakassapa's predilection towards strict disciplinary observances is exemplifed in the Mahāgosinga Sutta in *Majjhimā Nikāya* (i. 214), wherein he is said to extoll the merits of forest-dwelling, eating almsfood, wearing robes made of discarded rags, and practicing meditation while secluded away from society.

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contemporary audience as well. The Venerable Mahasup is represented in terms of all of us, as if we personally had a stake in what he accomplished in the past. The text thus veers out to incorporate the reader and listener into the narrative in an effort to more clearly show how history impinges upon them also. In this instance, the first-person possessive prounoun "our" is spoken by the narrator as well as by the deities:

> At that time our Mahathera Mahasup, having eaten in the city named Pāvā, and while going to the city of Kusinārā, proceeded along the way. At that time many deities who were born in the divine world, having minds which were inclined toward the Mahathera Mahasup, not seeing the Mahathera Mahasup in that worship assembly, and thinking "Where might our dear Thera be?," and while looking around, having seen him proceeding along the way, made a resolution thinking, 'May the fire on this sandalwood funeral pyre not be kindled for these kings except when after our Mahathera Mahasup, who is our Svāmidaru, comes and venerates the Buddha.'[262]

The ambiguity over whether the audience of the Pāli text finds itself in a relationship with the ancient monk dissipates in the Sinhala version of the narrative. The Thera in this account belongs not only to the deities, but he is in some sense directly linked with the audience itself. In this way, the text trains readers and listeners to follow the narrative with a personal investment in what occurs therein. The rhetoric of the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* effectively reorients the relationship of intimacy away from the exclusive province of the deities and toward also the readers and listeners of the text. Moreover, the Venerable Mahasup is said to be "our Svāmidaru" in imitation of the frequent remarks

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262 *SThūp* 70: *E samayehi apagē mahasup maha terun vahansē pāvā naṁ nuvara dī vaḷaňdā kusinārā nuvaraṭa vaḍanā sēk ataramagaṭa vāḍa vadāḷa sēka. E samayehi mahasup maha terun vahansē kerehi sit pahadavā divyalokayehi upan bohō devatāvō ē pūjā samāgamayehi mahasup mahaterun vahansē no dāka,'apagē kuḷupaga terun vahansē koyi dō hō' yi balannāhu ataramaga vaḍanā dāka, 'apagē svāmidaru vū mahasup maha terun vahansē avut budun vāňdi kalhi mut, mē sañdun dara sāyehi mē rajadaruvanṭa gini nāviḷēvā' yi adhiṣṭhāna kaḷōya.*

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made elsewhere by the narrator when describing the Buddha or Bodhisattva. I believe that we should read this remark as an indicator of how the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* positions its audience to see themselves as related both dependently and intimately with notable Buddhist agents in the past.

The power of the *Thūpavaṃsa*s to effect changes in the ways that people see themselves and exist in the world is thus clearly hinted at by the language of the narratives. That is to say, these texts represent history as a collection of stories that have immediate ramifications on the welfare of beings who are contemporary to them. Historical narratives matter not just for the sake of preserving details and facts, but primarily for the effects they are presumed to have on readers and listeners. The seamless transition between historical narrative and transformed audience is suggested by the words that conclude the account of the Brazen Palace in the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa*:

> Aside from the priceless riches for that mansion, the wealth which was donated for the mansion by the Great King Duṭugāmuṇu, who had [the quality of] alms-giving which was great, was worth about thirty crores. Therefore, knowledgeable beings! One should understand that, with reference to the accumulation of wealth which must be given up when one goes to the next world, that king, by thus giving alms, he took it along in the next world.[263]

Having learned of that king's generosity, the readers and listeners are made "knowledgeable"by the text that conveys the direct correlation between Duṭugāmuṇu's gift-giving and his rebirth as a deity at the end of the narrative. Instead of simply preaching that material wealth is of soteriological value only

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263 *SThūp* 146: *Mahat vū parityāga āti duṭugāmuṇu maharajjuruvan visin ē prāsādayaṭa anargha vastun tabā prāsādaya piṇisa parityāga kaḷa tiskeḷak pamaṇaya. Esē heyin nuvaṇāti satvayeni paralova yana kala hāra piyāyā yutu vū dhana samūhaya ē rajjuruvō mesē dan dīmen kāṭiva paralova gena giyahayi datayutu.* Cf. *Thūp* 218.

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when given away, the narrative describes specific historical accounts of how this dictum was shown to be true. In short, the text makes people know the value of giving and the positive fruits of good karma produced therein. By recalling history this way, the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* presumes to transform how its audience conceives of wealth. Readers and listeners are therefore knowledgeable in as much as they have been made to understand through the account of Duṭugāmuṇu that when wealth is given away righteously, the giver stands to benefit from his or her acts of generosity.

The interest and concern shown for the audience in the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s reflects, I believe, a positive evaluation of the capacity of their narratives to shape readings and recitals, as well as readers and listeners. The periodic "dialogue" that the texts engage in with their audiences suggests that in medieval Sri Lanka, historical literature was imagined and employed to transform an audience. When the narratives of the *Thūpavaṃsa*s veer outwards to speak to the conditions of people contemporary with a given reading or recital, the texts work to involve their readers and listeners in a narrative contract that encourages people to interpret history as a direct influence over their own lives. Whereas in literary theory, notions of a "contract" between a text and reader usually imply a willingness of the latter to accept the qualified reality of a fictional work, we would do well to acknowledge Eco's claim that the internal cohesion of both true and fictional narratives are structurally analogous and therefore read in a similar way.[264] History, like one's experience of everyday life, tends to be narrated in the form of stories that take place in familiar or at

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264 Eco, *Six Walks in the Fictional Woods*, pp. 119-122.

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least imaginable settings. The most fantastic fictional stories are usually set in verisimilar surroundings that resemble our experience of the laws and conditions of the "real world."[265] Thus, the literary qualities of Buddhist history work within this same context, narrating stories that are realistic by virtue of their referents that are known to its readers and listeners.[266] Yet, Wolfgang Iser helpfully suggests that the use of "simulated reality" in fiction does not merely denote a desire to copy what is a familiar reality, but instead it functions to enable us to see the familiar reality differently through new eyes.[267] By framing history in terms of what "our" Buddha, "our" Bodhisattva, and "our" venerable monk or nun have done, the audience is led to see themselves in a relationship with virtuous persons from the past, in which former acts carry present implications for the audience. In short, the coherence created in the plots of the *Thūpavaṃsa*s are designed to carry over and be seen to affect the lives of their readers and listeners who have been linked to the past through their implied presence in the narratives.

Aside from bringing the narratives of history to bear upon the lives of readers and listeners, the *Thūpavaṃsa*s also employ rhetorical strategies to develop a kind of historical consciousness deemed to be productive in encounters with the texts. Readers and listeners of Buddhist histories are, for example, conditioned to see sites of continuity between past and present. As aspects of the plot of the text, the coherence and continuity of history is a

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265 Eco, *Six Walks in the Fictional Woods*, pp. 79-83.

266 Such referents could include the Mahāthūpa and other physically existing structures and places mentioned in the texts.

267 Iser, *The Act of Reading*, p. 181.

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function of the literary construction of the narratives of the *Thūpavaṃsa*s. Yet, in contrast with the rupture between past and present found in the historiography of the modern West, medieval Buddhist history-writing works to connect the two in the minds of its audience.[268] Indeed, as the texts suggest, even the future becomes linked and is made predictable in relation to what has occurred in the past. One particularly concrete method of effecting this sense of historical coherence is the use of literary techniques that Eco calls the "flashback" and the "flashforward." When the narrative is recounted contemporaneously, the narrator or a character can refer to something that happened prior ro the time of the narrated events in a flashback or, alternatively, they can flashforward and hint at something that has yet to happen but is anticipated.[269] For Eco, these techniques are chiefly seen as authorial strategies to alter the pace of the narrative and the reader's sense of temporality in following the story. Buddhist history-writing, on the other hand, makes use of flashbacks and flashforwards apparently to enhance the import of events and to illustrate how past, present, and future are inextricably linked.

It is to be expected, perhaps, that the Buddhist doctrine of karma influences the manners in which history is conceived. When what is in the present and what will be in the future has already, in some sense, *been* in the past in as much as prior events determine subsequent ones, an understanding of

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[268] On the epistemological basis of modern western history-writing, see Michel de Certeau, *The Writing of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), pp. 2-3. Briefly put, de Certeau attempts to expose the move common to much modern historiography where a clear distinction is made between an objective reality lying "out there" and the discourse employed by the historian to express that reality. By making the past somehow "other," history can assume the privilege to make it comprehensible as a form of knowledge that is knowable only through the interpretations that the historian supplies.

[269] Eco, *Six Walks in the Fictional Woods*, p. 30.

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history in Buddhism is frequently coupled with attempts to probe into the past in order to make sense of one's present existence.[270] Accordingly, the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsas* make occasional reference to how past acts condition later destinies. A clear example of this narrative presentation of history is found in the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa*'s account of the *arahant* who is mistakenly accused for writing a love letter to the queen of King Kālaṇitissa and condemned to be placed in a cauldron of oil by the jealous sovereign. When the oil fails to become hot, the Thera is depicted as reflecting over the reason for that fact:

> The Thera, remaining in the cauldron of oil, thinking, 'What may be the reason for the oil not to become hot?,' and while looking with the Divine Eye, having ascertained that, 'Seeing that when I had been born as a cowherd in a former birth, having dropped a fly in a pot of boiling hot milk, I killed it; it is not the fault of the king. It is the karma that was produced by me in a former birth,' and after he discarded his resolve, he boiled in the oil and passed away in complete Nirvana.[271]

Therein, the narrative reinforces standard doctrinal understandings of cause and effect, while pointing out the implications that karma may have on historical thinking. Yet the links between past, present, and future are not only portrayed in causal terms, nor are they solely utilized to promote Buddhist teachings concerning karma. Indeed, Buddhist history as written in the Pāli and Sinhala

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270 Gerald James Larson, "The *Trimūrti* of *Smṛti* in Classical Indian Thought," *Philosophy East & West* 43, no. 3 (July 1993),p. 385. While Larson focuses upon the effects of karma on classical Hindu and Buddhist conceptions of time, his discussion is also relevant for understanding how notions of karma may inform an historical consciousness. In this sense, knowing the past has direct soteriological relevance for Buddhists as it translates into a knowledge of the workings of karma and, by extension, the means to be released from the cyclical existence in *saṃsāra*. We will recall also that tradition holds that the three types of knowledge that the Buddha developed during the hours before his Enlightenment consisted of remembering his former births, arriving at a knowledge of the passing away and arising of all beings, and recognizing that the conditions of rebirth had been extinguished within him.

271 *SThūp* 112: *Terunvahansē tel kaṭārayē vāḍa hiñda 'tel huṇu novannāṭa kāraṇā kiṁ dō hō' yi divāsin balana sēk 'yaṭagiya jātiyehi gopaluva taman vahansē upan tānadī kakiyana huṇu kiri kaḷayaka māssaku heḷā mārū lesa dāka, rajugē varada nāta. Yaṭagiya jātiya mā kaḷa karmaya' yi dāna adhiṣṭhāna haḷa pasu telehi kakiyā pirinivan pā vadāḷa sēka.*

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*Thūpavaṃsa*s also appears designed to give rise to a sense of how the past acts of a few condition the experiences and fortunes of the many in the present and future.

The Pāli *Thūpavaṃsa*, for instance, contains a brief account where flashbacks and a flashforward contribute to a perspective of history where both the past and the future are brought to bear upon the present. Buddhist narratives of history implicitly establish the temporal extensions of the past and future to the present by illuminating how particular places and events in time have corresponding prior and posterior counterparts. Collins has already noted that Buddhist narratives can and typically do incorporate both repetitive and non-repetitive frames of time.[272] In other words, within the linear progression of time where individual life begins and ends, certain structural patterns and images are also seen to repeat themselves. As such, by relating specific historical events to other events before the time of the narrative and afterwards, the texts work to make the present day contingent on or at least related to both what has come before and what is yet to come. The Pāli *Thūpavaṃsa* relates that sense of time in its description of how the royal elephant of King Devānampiya Tissa carries the right collar-bone relic to the site where the Thūpārāma *dāgāba* would later be built:

> Thereupon the noble elephant, being surrounded by many musicians, . . . having departed by the south gate while tremendous devotion was being shown in the whole city, going to a place west of the Thūpārāma where it is said that the Pabhejavatthu [once] stood, turned back again towards [the future site of] the Thūpārāma. And that was the site where shrines were built for the three previous Buddhas, having established their water-strainer, belt, and bathing cloak [respectively]. Yet when the

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272 Collins, *Nirvana and Other Buddhist Felicities*, pp. 239-241.

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> shrines were destroyed, it remained surrounded by various bushes with branches filled with thorns by the power of the deities, who thought, 'May no one ruin this with impurities, filth, dirt, or rubbish.'[273]

The above account juxtaposes several different points in time to describe the significance of the elephant's selection of the place to enshrine the relic. The site indicated by the elephant is at once the future site of the Thūpārāma and the previous site of three *dāgābas* in the distant past. As such, the enshrining of the right collar-bone relic in that place was not accidental, but rather fulfilled a historical pattern of building *dāgābas* at that site. To the extent that the audience of the text is familiar with or has even visited the Thūpārāma shrine in Anurādhapura, they are instructed to see how the past made their present possible. The text therefore works to give rise to an historical consciousness in its readers and listeners wherein the phenomena of prophecy and providence are possible. As such, Buddhist history-writing depicts the present as something more or less foreseen and prefigured by others in the past.

Moreover, the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsas* display efforts directed at imparting a particular relationship towards the past within their respective audiences. We might even posit that readings and recitals of these texts train devotees in looking to the past and learning from it. Put differently, the

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273 *Thūp* 199: *Atha so hatthināgo anekatālāvacaraparivuto ativiya uḷārena pūjāsakkārena sakkariyamāno pacchimadisābhimukho hutvā apasakkanto yāva nagarassa puratthimadvāraṃ tāva gantvā puratthimena dvārena nagaraṃ pavisitvā sakalanagare uḷārāya pūjāya kayiramānāya dakkhiṇadvārena nikkhamitvā thūpārāmassa pacchimadisābhāge pabhejavatthu nāma kira atthi, tattha gantvā puna thūpārāmābhimukho eva paṭinivatti. So ca purimakānaṃ tiṇṇaṃ sammāsambuddhānaṃ dhammakarakaṃ kāyabandhanaṃ udakasāṭikaṃ patiṭṭhāpetvā katacetiyaṭṭhānaṃ hoti. Tad etaṃ vinaṭṭhesu pi cetiyesu devatānubhāvena kaṇṭakasamākiṇṇasākhehi nānāgacchehi parivutaṃ tiṭṭhati, mā naṃ koci ucciṭṭhāsucimalakacavarehi sandūsesīti.* In *The Chronicle of the Thūpa and the Thūpavaṃsa*, Jayawickrama states that the "Pabhejavatthu" erroneously refers to a shrine dedicated to a *yakkha* called "Maheja" as noted in the sub-commentary of the *Mahāvaṃsa* (p. 66). Cf. *SThūp* 104, where the shrine is called "Prabhejavastu" apparently in imitation of the Pāli *Thūpavaṃsa*'s account.

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*Thūpavaṃsa*s actively work to make history both a topic of interest and a component of devotional practice. Model readers and listeners are thus created in part by narrative strategies that directly involve the audience in the process of recalling what happened in the past. To that end, the use of rhetorical questions in the body of the narrative underlines a method of engaging readers and listeners to recall or anticipate where the story goes next. Eco describes that practice as an "inferential walk," wherein readers are led to make predictions out of the text in response to gaps in the text or sudden, sly appeals made to them in the narrative.[274] As a literary technique, rhetorical questions function to stimulate the reader or listener to reflect upon the story and anticipate what will happen next. Furthermore, in Buddhist histories, rhetorical questions also promote the habit of thinking about the past and remembering what the Buddha and other virtuous beings have done previously.

Asking questions of an audience contributes to efforts towards making them good readers and listeners. The Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s each pose questions to the model reader, though examples of this method are clearly more prevalent in the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa*. Of course, at times such questions seem designed simply to move the narrative forward or to elaborate upon an event. For example, while recalling how Queen Mahāmāyā, the Buddha's birth-mother, had a dream that symbolically foretold of the Buddha's conception, the narrator in the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* suddenly asks "How was that?" and then describes the contents of her dream in detail.[275] The appearance of words such

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[274] Eco, *Six Walks in the Fictional Woods*, pp. 52-53.
[275] *SThūp* 18.

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as "*ē kesē da*" and similar interrogative exclamations frequently mark locations in the text where an explanation or detailed description follows. In other cases, rhetorical questions are put into the mouths of characters in the story. The female deity who venerates the Mahāthūpa and exemplifies the heavenly felicity that awaits those who have labored on the construction of a *dāgāba* is depicted as asking herself, "Doing what act of merit while in the human world could I have received this prosperity?"[276] The narrative answers this question by having her recall that she worked on the Mahāthūpa for wages in her previous birth.

I wish to argue, however, that the inclusion of rhetorical questions in the narratives of the *Thūpavaṃsa*s represents the attempt to tutor readers and listeners in the recalling of past acts that are held to have ramifications upon people's lives in the present. In this way, rhetoric is used not only to introduce accounts in the narrative, but also to encourage an audience to query the past in ways that are conducive to their well-being. Thus, in the Pāli *Thūpavaṃsa*, the narrator follows the description of the Buddha's resolution to spread his relics to other lands with a question to the reader or listener. "How many relics of his were spread? How many were not spread? These seven relics, namely the four teeth, two collar-bones, and the frontal bone, were not scattered. The rest were scattered."[277] That structure of questioning and answering in the narrative reinforces the idea that a knowledge of the past contributes to a religious life. Since several of the above-mentioned relics are held to have been established in

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276 *SThūp* 162: *Manuṣya lokayehi dī kavara pinkamak koṭa mē sampat mā laddō hō yi.*

277 *Thūp* 172: *Kati pana 'ssa dhātuyo vippakiṇṇā, kati na vippakiṇṇā 'ti. Catasso dāṭhā, dve akkhakā, uṇhisan ti imā satta dhātuyo na vipppakiṇṇā, sesā vippakiriṃsu.*

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shrines in Sri Lanka, the reader or listener of the *Thūpavaṃsa* may use that knowledge to inform his or her veneration at particular relic shrines that are understood to house relics of the Buddha.[278] When Buddhist histories ask their audiences about the past and then go on to answer their own questions, they train them to recall what happened previously. The practice of posing questions to an audience also encourages those individuals to take history as an object of inquiry that demands their attention.

In addition to creating an audience in the habit of questioning and recalling what happened in the past, rhetorical questions also help the readers and listeners of Buddhist histories to become skilled in making moral judgments. It has been stated elsewhere that religious narratives are effective tools in taking audiences through the complex process of making moral choices in the midst of conflict-ridden situations.[279] The *Thūpavaṃsa*s assume a similar role in as much as they present how difficult moral choices are made by the characters in historical narratives. For example, the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* depicts King Duṭugāmuṇu fretting over how he might have the world's largest *dāgāba* built. Unable to sleep, the king reflects, "The inhabitants of the kingdom, having fought the Demaḷas along with me, have come upon great hardship. By what means might I have bricks formed righteously and fairly, in a manner appropriate for the Great Dāgāba, without causing hardship to the

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278 It is significant that the vast majority of medieval Buddhist chronicles are concerned with the stories of particular relics. For instance, in relation to three of the seven relics that are said to have survived intact, the *Thūpavaṃsa* describes how the Buddha's right collar bone was established in the Thūpārāma, the *Dāṭhāvaṃsa* relates the story of how one tooth relic was brought to Sri Lanka from India, and the *Dhātuvaṃsa* explains that the frontal bone of the Buddha's head was deposited in a *dāgāba* in Seruvila.

279 Ronald Green, *Religion and Moral Reason: A New Method for Comparative Study* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 196-197.

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beings of the world?"[280] In asking that question, the narrative provokes the audience to reflect upon the dilemma that the king faces. Although the gods intervene at this point in the story to produce bricks for the Mahāthūpa with their divine powers, the readers and listeners have already been forced to consider the issue of how much help one can ask for from others when one knows that will be a burden to them.

Likewise, later in the narrative, the text presents the problem of what to do with the relics that are guarded by *nāga*s but, at the same time, are destined to be enshrined in the Mahāthūpa. Kevin Trainor has discussed this same problem and concluded that the theft of relics does not constitute a theft because the narratives that relate such events typically ascribe them as conforming to the intention of the Buddha.[281] This rationale that legitimates the theft of the relics from the *nāga*s is correctly understood. Yet the *Sīnhala Thūpavaṃsa*'s presentation of this event appears focused on highlighting the moral dilemma related to acquiring those relics. The issue over who deserves to have relics to venerate is purposefully drawn out in order to exercise the moral reasoning of an audience. After the novice Soṇuttara has taken the relics away from the *nāga* world, the *nāga*s travel to his monastery in Laṅkā and plead their case for possessing relics. They begin their long and impassioned address to the monks by asking, "Is it only for humans that this suffering of *saṃsāra* is acute? Is it only for humans that Nirvana is sweet? Is it only for humans that the

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280 *SThūp* 146: *Rājyavāsīhu mā hā kāṭiva demaḷa saṭan koṭa mahat vū dukaṭa pāminiyōya. Kavara upāyakin lōkavāsīnṭa duk nodī dāhāmen semen maha dāgabaṭa sudusu lesa uḷu upadavā ganiṁ dō hō yi.*

281 Kevin Trainor, "When is a Theft not a Theft?: Relic Theft and the Cult of the Buddha's Relics in Sri Lanka," *Numen* 39, no. 1 (April 1992), pp. 8-10

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Svāmidaruvō, who is the Buddha, having fulfilled the Perfections, became a Buddha?"[282] Such questions are compelling enough to lead the monks to return a small portion of the relics to the *nāgas* to allow them to worship the Buddha's remains in their own world. Yet they also constitute an important moral issue for the audience to reflect upon—namely, who are the recipients of the Buddha's acts? By casting that issue in the form of a series of rhetorical questions, the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* invites its readers and listeners to consider who benefits from what the Buddha has done in the past. At the same time, the narrative works to develop in its audience a habit of questioning the significance of history and its relevance for beings in the present.

III.3 LEARNING FROM THE PAST

While the rhetorical use of language in the *Thūpavaṃsas* functions in part to fashion model readers and listeners who are predictably moved by the literary effects, there are also signs that the *Thūpavaṃsas* include directions for putting these texts to use in the world. Alongside the narrative that recounts the history of the Mahāthūpa, one can find specific instructions and allusions that indicate how one should handle the texts. Addressing an audience both directly and indirectly provides some of the examples where readers and listeners are directed to make use of the texts in ways that are productive toward their moral development and soteriological advancement. In this sense, we might interpret the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsas* as texts that prefigure not only specific manners of reading, but also particular ways of using historical narratives in

[282] *SThūp* 182: *Mē sasara duk dāḍi vūyē minisunṭa ma da? Nivan mihiri vūyē minisunṭa ma da? Budu vū svāmi daruvāṇan pāramitā purā budu vūyē minisunṭa ma da?*

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concert with religious practices. We can see a clear example of how texts instruct readers for their use in the *Jātakamālā*, which was written in Sanskrit by Ārya Śūra sometime between the fourth and sixth centuries C.E. In the story of King Śibi, where the Bodhisattva plucks out his own eyes and hands them over to a blind beggar, the narrative opens and closes with the words, "Since the Lord suffered hundreds of hardships to acquire the good Teaching for us, we should listen to it with respect."[283] While highlighting the moral lesson to be gained from the story, that sentence also advises the audience on how they should receive the text itself. It functions, in other words, as something akin to stage directions and points to an instance where the text attempts to determine the way it is to be used by its audience.[284]

Similarly, part of the rhetorical work of the *Thūpavaṃsa*s includes instructions to their readers and listeners concerning what they ought to do with respect to the text and its narrative. The audience is periodically enjoined to take up devotional practices as a result from what they have learned from history. Thus, while relating what occured in the past, the *Thūpavaṃsa*s attempt to fashion conduct in the present. The texts portray efforts towards making their respective audiences to think of themselves and the world around them in particular ways. We might take such instances where the narratives insert sermons and language directed towards effecting piety as extensions of the above-mentioned strategies to create model readers and listeners. While

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283 Peter Khoroche, trans., *Once the Buddha was a Monkey: Ārya Śūra's* Jātakamālā (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), p. 10.

284 I would like to acknowledge Charles Hallisey for suggesting the idea of "stage directions" for examining how some Buddhist texts explicitly relate how they should be received by an audience. It is worth noting that Khoroche did not translate all of the *Jātakamālā*'s stage directions.

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involving an audience with the narrative by making them feel directly affected by the actions of historical agents, the *Thūpavaṃsa*s seek to constitute their readers and listeners as people who have internalized habits of thought and angles of vision that facilitate desired religious practice and moral sensibilities.

Among the injunctions that are addressed either directly to the audience or indirectly to readers and listeners through the eyes and ears of characters mentioned in the narrative, we can begin by noting how the *Thūpavaṃsa*s repeatedly operate as doctrinal handbooks that attest to religious truths and encourage devotional practice. A quote appearing near the end of the Pāli *Thūpavaṃsa* illustrates the attempt to relate the narrative of the text to lived realities of present-day readers and listeners. After having described how King Duṭṭhagāmaṇī was reborn as a deity who resides in the Tusita Heaven as a result of his generous acts of almsgiving, the narrative summarizes the significance of the account for those encountering the text. Without specifiying the source of the quote, the narrator says, "Thus, when the accumulation of wealth is without substance, wise ones, having made a gift to the Triple Gem of that which is always linked to impermanence, taking its substance, they go to a happy state."[285] That verse effectively serves to instruct the audience that since material wealth gained in one life cannot be taken to the next, their best course of action is to make offerings to the Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha in order to earn merit that helps to determine the nature of one's subsequent rebirths. In short, the *Thūpavaṃsa* reiterates a point often made in its narrative—material

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285 *Thūp* 253: *Evaṃ asāre nicaye dhanānaṃ/ aniccasaṅgaṃ satataṃ sapaññā/ katvāna cāgaṃ ratanattayamhi/ ādāya sāraṃ sugatiṃ vajanti*. Cf. *Mhv* XXXII. 84 for a considerably different verse occuring in the same point in the narrative after Duṭṭhagāmaṇī's ascension into the Tusita Heaven.

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wealth is most valuable when it is given away. That lesson was exemplified in the beginning of the text by Sumedha's rejection of his inheritance and at the end by the recollection of Duṭṭhagāmaṇī's many gifts to the Triple Gem. Yet with that verse, the *Thūpavaṃsa* assumes the role of espousing a form of practice to its readers and listeners, instilling in them an awareness of the value of giving gifts.

The *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* likewise admonishes its audience on the importance of merit (Sinh: *piṅ*) and occassionally functions as a source of doctrinal instruction. The narrative of the text thus strives to instill habits of thought in readers and listeners through both direct exhortations and sermons that have been inserted into the dialogue of the text. For example, while describing the history of the *dāgāba* at Miyuṅguṇu (P: Mahiyaṅgaṇa), the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* uses the episode detailing the heroic and pious acts of King Duṭugāmuṇu as an opportunity to instruct its "model" audience: "Thus even those having wisdom, who do battle quickly, who are mines for virtues and who have dread from the danger of *saṃsāra*, having done acts of merit, experienced happiness for themselves in the world of the gods. Therefore all of you should always do merit without delay."[286] As the story of the king illustrates, there is no excuse from doing moral acts among those who know the value of merit. The audience is understood to profit from encounters with the text, as it furnishes them with exemplary stories that spur their own devotional

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286 *SThūp* 133: *Mesē ikman ikmanva saṭan karannā vū guṇayanṭa ākara vū sasara bhayin bhayapat vū nuvaṇāttō pavā pinkaṁ koṭa devlō sāpa anubhava koṭa gattōya. Esē heyin siyalu satvayeni sāma vēlehi ma nopamāva kusal kaḷayutu.* Cf. the following exhortation from the Pāli version: "Thus even while doing urgent deeds, those who are mines of virtue, being wise, perform merit being fearful of the dangers of *saṃsāra*." See *Thūp* 210: *Evaṃ accāyikaṃ kammaṃ karontāpi guṇākarā karonti puññaṃ sappaññā saṃsārabhayabhīrukā' ti.*

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practice. The cycle of birth and death called *saṃsāra* is therefore depicted as an ever-present threat that jeopardizes one's chances for happiness and well-being.[287] Even though King Duṭugāmuṇu was fully occupied with a military campaign against an invading army, he was apparently cognizant of the need to venerate the Buddha and therefore took the time to build up the *dāgāba* already there. By shifting the focus of the text from recalling history to preaching to a contemporary audience, the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* lends us a clue as to how the text could be used. History contains moral lessons that may be drawn out for an audience to teach and reinforce ideas that are valued for a religious life.

Yet direct exhortations are not the only way that the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* admonishes its readers and listeners. The narrative also introduces doctrinal material in the form of sermons that are addressed to characters in the text itself. Descriptions of preaching that occurred in the past effectively become sermons to the listeners and readers of the text when the central message of the discourse is related in the narrative. The *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* supplies evidence of this rhetorical move in accounts such as the description of Queen Vihāradevī's attempt to give birth to a son. Elaborating upon the terse account in the Pāli *Thūpavaṃsa*, the Sinhala text inserts a sermon that is ostensibly directed toward the queen but, in reality, applies equally to everyone. The text describes how Vihāradevī goes to give an alms-offering (*dāna*) to the Sangha and asks, "I wish to hear about the fruit of the alms-

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287 A later Sinhala poem, the fifteenth-century *Lō Vāḍa Saṅgarāva*, repeatedly emphasizes the theme of the dangers of *saṃsāra* and the immediate need for devotees of the Buddha to perform meritorious acts. See the text and translation of this poem in David J. Kalupahana, *Nagarjuna's Moral Philosophy and Sinhala Buddhism* (Kelaniya, Sri Lanka: The Postgraduate Institute of Pali and Buddhist Studies, 1995).

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offering that has been given."[288] Her request to learn of the merit that she earns by giving a *dāna* to the monks conforms to an aspect of the traditional pattern of exchange between the monks and laity. After laypeople give food, drink, and the monastic requisites to the Sangha, it is then customary for a monk to explicate the advantages of giving a *dāna* and instruct the laity to rejoice in the meritorious act that they have just performed.[289] The monk in the narrative thus responds appropriately with the words, "You have received prosperity like this by the force of the merit that was done by you in days gone by. Now also if you do merit without being negligent, receiving prosperity greater than this in the future, you will perceive Nirvana."[290]

Although the above sermon is directed towards Queen Vihāradevī in the narrative, it is not difficult to see how it could also be directed to the readers and listeners of the text. The subject of those words is not Vihāradevī per se, but rather "you" (Sinh: *topa*). Moreover, the lack of specificity used to describe the prosperity that "you" have, in turn, allows anyone who can imagine themselves as fortunate at some level to read or hear those words as if they spoke to one's own condition.[291] Since the sermon essentially says that the

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288 *SThūp* 113: *Dun danehi vipāka asanu kāmāttemi yi.*

289 W. S. Karunatillake, "The Religiousness of Buddhists in Sri Lanka through Belief and Practice," in *Religiousness in Sri Lanka*, ed. John Ross Carter (Colombo: Marga Institute, 1979), p. 26.

290 *SThūp* 113: *Yaṭagiya davasa topa kaḷa kuśalabalayen me vāni sampat laduva. Dānut pramāda no vī pin kaḷā naṁ matu meyaṭa vaḍā sampat labā nivan daknāva yi vadāḷa sēka.*

291 Indeed, just to be born a human has usually constituted a fortunate rebirth (P: *sugati*) in the Sri Lankan Buddhist tradition. In contrast to the four miserable states (P: *apāya*) of rebirth as a hell-dweller, as a hungry-ghost, as an *asura*, or as an animal, human and heavenly rebirths are generally seen to offer at least some happiness, however temporary. Note, however, that a human rebirth 1) in a "border country" where Buddhist monastics and laypersons are absent, 2) as a heretic in a country where Buddhism is present, 3) as a person who is deficient in mental abilities, or 4) during a period of time where the Buddha and his Dispensation are wholly lacking in the world have also been described as unfortunate rebirths. See, for example, the "Sangīti Sutta," in *D* III. 264 and *Lōv*, vv. 9-17.

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prosperity you enjoy now was due to past meritorious acts and the subsequent performance of merit will earn you even greater rewards in the future, the narrative at this point invites the reader or listener to briefly imagine him or herself as the recipient of the sermon. The grammatical use of the second person in place of a third person pronoun like "her" allows the recipient of the discourse to include people in the audience. The ambiguity of those words allows the text to be used suggestively to instruct readers and listeners on the value of virtuous conduct. Without departing from the plot, the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* permits its audience to step into the place of the audience depicted in the text. As such, we see how the rhetoric of the narrative underscores the use of Buddhist history in terms of indirectly encouraging readers and listeners themselves to accept that which was taught earlier to others.

Both extant *Thūpavaṃsa*s include passages wherein doctrinal expositions that are voiced by characters in the plot also serve to inform those readers and listeners who are anticipated to encounter and learn from the text. Indeed, at least some of the elaborations that the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s make upon the *Mahāvaṃsa* seem directed towards elucidating a doctrinal point underlying the sequence of events in the narrative. This activity is clearly illustrated in the treatments that those three texts give to the account of King Duṭṭhagāmaṇī's insistent attempt to reward a monk who offered a brick for the construction of the Mahāthūpa. Upon learning that a visiting monk from another district contributed a brick to the work on the *dāgāba* without accepting payment, the king sends one of his guards to donate two costly cloaks, a pair of sandals, and other gifts to that monk. In the *Mahāvaṃsa*, the guard's

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presentation of those gifts to the monk is depicted in a straightforward manner, wherein the guard tells the Thera,

> 'These [requisites] were taken by me for the Thera who is dear to my family, and the two garments are for my son. But I give them all to you.'
>
> Thus having spoken, giving those [requisites] to the Thera who took them and started off again, and venerating him according to the king's words, he relayed the king's message.[292]

At this point in the narrative, the account ends and abruptly shifts to a description of how those who labored on the Mahāthūpa were reborn in heaven. The conflict between the king's desire to reimburse all who work on the *dāgāba* and the monk's desire to donate his personal efforts freely remains largely unresolved. We only learn that persons who worked for wages at the site stood to benefit from their actions.

The *Thūpavaṃsa*s, however, address this issue directly by elaborating upon the exchange between the monk and the guard. It appears, moreover, that their respective accounts are at least to some degree original and innovative. Even the *Vaṃsatthappakāsinī* largely ignores the inherent conflict of interest in this account, and instead chooses only to gloss the latter verse by describing the guard's claim that he brought those requisites for another monk as "untruthful speech" (*nikatiyuttavacanaṃ*).[293] The Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s, however, use this event as an excuse to deliver a brief sermon on the nature of

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[292] *Mhv* XXX. 40-41: *Kulūpagassa therassa gahitā me ime mayā*
vatthayugaṃ tu puttassa sabbe tāni dadāmi vo.

Iti vatvāna datvā te gahetvā gacchato pana
vanditvā rājavacasā rañño sandesam āha so.

[293] *Mhv-ṭ* 539.

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merit. In the Pāli version, the narrator relates a similar account wherein the guard first tells the monk that he will give the articles intended for others to him. The Thera accepts the pair of garments, the costly red blanket, the pair of sandals, and the other items offered to him. When the guard tells the real reason for giving the Thera gifts from the king, the reaction of the monk is supplied by the Pāli *Thūpavaṃsa*:

> The Thera, having heard that, thinking that 'The work that was done [by me] with great effort has been undone,' and becoming unhappy, pouring forth streams of tears, standing and saying 'Lay devotee, you take back your requisites,' he cast aside all the requisites. The guard said, 'What indeed are you saying, Sir? Even if the king were to give requisites measuring up to the highest point of existence, it would not be able to equal your brick. He makes me act thus because of his wish that 'I will do all the work on the Great Shrine without the assistance of others.' Sir, having taken the requisites that were received by yourself, may you arouse serene joy in your mind,' and having convinced the Thera, he departed.[294]

In that brief dialogue, the text expresses the episode in the form of a problem. The Thera at first resists the gifts from the king, thinking that to accept them would result in a cancellation of the merit he has earned from making and donating a brick. The guard, however, persuades the monk to accept those gifts, presumably because the value of his gift to the Mahāthūpa exceeds any attempt towards recompense. The *Thūpavaṃsa* seems to indicate that the merit earned from small acts of piety compares favorably to that which is obtained from making more costly offerings. At the very least, its exposition on the

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294 *Thūp* 230: *Thero taṃ sutvā mahantena parakkamena katakammaṃ akataṃ viya jātan ti domanassappatto hutvā assudhāraṃ pavattetvā, 'upāsaka, tava parikkhāraṃ tvaṃ eva gaṇhāhī 'ti ṭhitako 'va sabbaṃ parikkhāraṃ chaḍḍesi. Balattho, 'kiṃ nāma bhante vadatha, esa rājā tuyhaṃ bhavaggappamāṇaṃ katvā paccayaṃ dento pi tava iṭṭhakānurūpaṃ kātuṃ na sakkoti, kevalaṃ pana mahācetiye kammam aññesaṃ apattikaṃ katvā karomīti adhippāyena evam kāreti, tumhe pana bhante attanā laddhaparikkhāraṃ gahetvā cittaṃ pasādenā 'ti vatvā theraṃ saññāpetvā pakkāmi.*

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value of the Thera's act of merit invites the reflection of the audience on the nature and import of merit for their own lives.

Predictably, the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* elaborates on this episode even more. The narrative therein spells out the underlying issues behind the conflict of interests in greater detail than what is found in the Pāli *Thūpavaṃsa*. For instance, whereas the Pāli version speaks of a pile of monastic requisites reaching the highest point of existence, the Sinhala text supplies the proper name of the highest Brahmā world, that is to say, the Akaniṭā realm. Also, while the Pāli *Thūpavaṃsa* refers to giving a brick as the "work that was done" (*katakammaṃ*) by the Thera, the Sinhala version specifies that it was an "act of merit" (*kuśalakarmaya*). In short, the comparable excerpt from the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* helps to show how the text incorporates a discourse on merit to influence the way its audience conceives of religious practice:

> At that time the Thera, having heard the guard's speech, trembling with great sorrow and thinking, 'The act of merit which was done with difficulty by me at a *dāgāba* that is wondrous like this one is now undone,' and becoming unhappy, shedding streams of tears from his two eyes and saying, 'Why, Lay Devotee! Why have you ruined the merit which was done with difficulty by me? Take back your requisites,' he threw aside all the requisites. That old guard who was skillful and knew matters announced thus to the Thera who had thrown aside the requisites like that, "Reverend! What are you saying, Sir? Aside from the fact that this King Duṭugämuṇu is acting thus out of the strong desire for merit, even if, saying 'I will give payment for the brick which was place by you, Sir,' the three robes and bowls were being given up to the Akaniṭā Brahma World, he is not able to make it equal the brick which was placed by you , Sir. Therefore, there is merit for you, Sir, with regard to the brick which you put in. [And] there is merit for the king in the requisites that the king has given,' and having thus spoke, consoling the Thera, giving all the requisites to the Thera,

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venerating at his resplendent feet, and taking his leave, he turned and went back to the city.[295]

Reading that account in relation to what is found in the *Mahāvaṃsa* and the Pāli *Thūpavaṃsa*, we can see how Parākrama Paṇḍita underscores the primacy of merit for understanding the exchange between the monk and the guard. The sadness felt by the Thera is explicitly attributed to the fear that his merit has been negated by accepting payment for his labors. Yet the episode provides a narrative account that examines further how merit functions in complicated systems of exchange. We again learn that the value of that brick outweighs the king's recompense. The Sinhala version of this episode adds a new detail, however, explaining that the king can also acquire merit along with the Thera. By saying that the king has ordered him to repay the monk out of a desire for merit, the guard makes it incumbent upon the monk to accept the gifts. The audience meanwhile is led to conclude that acts of merit may be reciprocated or rewarded without being diminished. Consequently, the text promotes the view that acts of merit can and should be collective endeavors in which more than one person shares.

The examination of the above episode shows that the narratives of Buddhist history were used in part to provoke reflection on issues of religious

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295 *SThūp* 161: *Evelehi terun vahansē da balatāgē bas asā mahat vū śokayen kampāva 'me vāni āścaryyamat vū dāgabaka mā visin dukin karana lada kuśalakarmaya no kaḷa naṁ veyi' yi domnasva de āsin kaṅdulu dhārā vaguruvā 'āyi upāsakaya! mā dukin kaḷa kusalaya kumakaṭa nasāpī da? tāgē pirikara tōma āraganuva' yi siyalu pirikara damā pū sēka. Esē pirikara damā vāḍa siṭi terun vahansēṭa ē kāraṇa dannā upāyavat balat mahaḷu mesē danvayi, 'svāmīni, numba vahansē kumak vadārana sēk da? Mē duṭugāmuṇu rajjuruvan puṇya lobhayen mesē karana bava mut numba vahansē lū uḷaṭa mila demi kiyā akaniṭā brahmalōkaya dakvā tunsivuru pātra dena laddē vī numut numba vahansē lū uḷa hā sari karaṇa no piḷivana. Rajjuruvan devū pirikara rajjuruvanṭa pinā' yi kiyā terunvahansē asvasā siyalu pirikara terun vahansēṭa dī obagē śrīpādaya vāṅda samugena peraḷā nuvaraṭa ma nāṅgī giyēya.*

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significance, as well as to condition specific interpretations of doctrinal points. In successive elaborations upon the story of a monk who surreptitiously donated a brick towards the construction of the Mahāthūpa, the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s introduce further material that appears designed to stimulate moral thought and action in their audiences. Yet it is worth reemphasizing that such instruction often takes the form of narrative story-telling. Rather than simply making direct moral exhortations for how the reader or listener ought to view their world, the *Thūpavaṃsa*s often encourage certain habits of thought through the characters' speech and behavior as depicted in their narratives. By inserting persuasive rhetoric into dialogues, the texts are able to entertain and admonish an audience simultaneously. Thus, for instance, the Pāli *Thūpavaṃsa* turns the *Mahāvaṃsa*'s account of how King Duṭṭhagāmaṇī prepared the citizens for the ceremony of enshrining the relics from a descriptive account into an imperative command. For its part, the *Mahāvaṃsa* merely recalls that, "the king, saying, 'Tomorrow there will be the enshrining of the relics,' sent the drum of proclamation around the city. And having arranged all the duties, he had the entire city and the road leading to it thoroughly decorated. And he had the citizens adorned."[296] The Pāli *Thūpavaṃsa*, however, reworks that account into language that can speak more effectively to its readers and listeners. "And also the king, having gone to the city, sent the drum of proclamation around the city: 'Tomorrow there will be the enshrining of the relics. May the

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296 *Mhv* XXXI. 32-33: *Bhavissati suve dhātunidhānanti mahīpati*
cāresi nagare bheriṃ sabbakiccaṃ vidhāya taṃ,

Nagaraṃ sakalañceva idhāgāmiñca añjasaṃ
alaṅkārayi sakkaccaṃ nāgare ca vibhusayi.

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citizens adorn themselves in accordance with their means, take such items as incense and garlands, and assemble in the courtyard of the Great Shrine."[297] Indeed, the latter version could be taken both as the content of the king's message and a polite suggestion on how the readers and listeners of the text ought to venerate the Mahāthūpa.

The *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* also contains several examples of moral injunctions couched within narrative dialogue. While ostensibly directed to characters within the story, those calls are frequently written with language that easily extends the message to reach the audience outside the text. For instance, right before the Buddha's last sermon, twenty thousand Śakra-deities implore, "Hey, listen to the sermon without making noise."[298] Those words also serve more generally to convey a sense of proper etiquette when one listens to a preacher. Again, after the *arahants* urge King Ajātaśatru to curtail his devotion to the relics, the king responds by saying, "Reverends! Taking the relics away quickly is not pleasing to my mind. But nevertheless it is proper for devotees like me to do what has been said by the [monks]."[299] In this instance, the king's moral reasoning concerning why he should halt the relic veneration is framed in speech that may condition or reinforce the viewpoints of readers and listeners. In other words, just as the king followed the advice of the monks despite his desire to do otherwise, so too may the person who has encountered

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297 *Thūp* 240: *Rājā pi nagaraṃ gantvā nagare bheriṃ carāpesi: sve mahācetiye dhātunidhānaṃ bhavissati, nāgarā attano attano vibhavānurūpena alaṅkaritvā gandhamālādīni gahetvā mahācetiyaṅgaṇaṃ osarantū 'ti.*

298 *SThūp* 66: *Ohō, aragala no koṭa baṇa asavya yi.*

299 *SThūp* 82: *Svāmīn vahansē! Vahā dhātūn vahansē genayāma magē sitaṭa satuṭu noveyi. Esē vuvat sarvajñaputrayan vahansē kīvā kirīma apa sē vū gāttavunṭa vaṭanē yayi.*

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this narrative conclude that he or she has a moral obligation to heed the instructions of monks.

In the course of the story, such exclamations fulfill a double meaning. At one level they function simply as devices to move the story along. Thus, as mentioned above, the king's command to adorn the city and its inhabitants sets the stage for depositing the relics in the Mahāthūpa. Yet, at another level, imperative statements invite the audience to imagine themselves in the place of the persons speaking and the persons spoken to in the narrative. Therefore, reading or hearing an invitation to dress up, take objects of worship, and go to the *dāgāba* allows the reader or listener to take those words as if personally directed to oneself. Although appearing in specific narrative contexts, such rhetoric is often phrased generally enough to be applicable to the lives of readers and listeners. An encounter with the text may thus be thought to promote ways of thinking about the steps involved in worshipping at *dāgābas*, manners of behaving at sermons, and the deference owed to monks. Conceptions of Buddhist practice presented in historical narratives have been worded in such a way as to state general truths that in turn can affect the manner in which contemporary readers and listeners view their own religious behavior.

The rhetoric of the *Thūpavaṃsas*, I would argue, represents an attempt to condition the ways people perceive the past, exist in the present, and conceive of the future. Writing history reflects concerns for presenting an account of the past that can be used to produce or reinforce habits of thought deemed to be beneficial to practitioners. Inclusive language, moral exhortations, and doctrinal expositions, to name a few of the rhetorical strategies employed by the

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*Thūpavaṃsa*s, transform the historical narrative from a passive document of the past into a creative source that gives rise to certain impressions of oneself and others in the world. The events of history are, in this way, supplemented by textual material that instructs the reader or listener in how to interpret the significance of the past for him or her in the present. Indeed, in contrast to modern western historiography that has generally been concerned with differentiating the present from the past, Buddhist history as exemplified by the *Thūpavaṃsa*s tries hard to establish coherence between the two.[300] For example, the texts continually allude to instances in history where past events were either foretold by previous occurrences or foretell subsequent ones. Thus, offerings of flowers by King Devānampiyatissa at various locations around Anuradhapura are accompanied by earthquakes that signify that the Brazen Palace and Mahāthūpa will be built in those same spots many years hence.[301] In relating how past events can serve to predict future ones, the *Thūpavaṃsa*s imply that in so far as history is depicted as predictable and repetitive, narrative accounts of the past presume to bear directly upon the lives of contemporary readers and listeners. The present has in effect been foreseen by beings and events in the past, and consequently this knowledge that is imparted by the *Thūpavaṃsa*s figures in one's own appraisal of one's present situation.

History matters in Sri Lankan Buddhism because it is given the responsibility for conditioning the way that one perceives and connects both the present and the past. History then, from the perspective of the audience, does

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300 On the tendency for historians to dissociate their work from past traditions in order to constitute the latter as an object of their knowledge and discourse, see de Certeau, *The Writing of History*, pp. 35-37.

301 *Thūp* 73, 204; *SThūp* 109-110.

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not only tell us where we come from, it tells us where we are now.[302] Yet the contemporary relevance of history, its ability to affect the ways that one conceives of oneself and the world, is the direct consequence of rhetorical language that guides the usage and reception of the *Thūpavaṃsa*s and other similar texts. While giving rise to habits of thought that condition how one acts in the present, Buddhist history also generates angles of vision that affect how one thinks of history and, more specifically, its figures and events. In other words, although the narratives in Buddhist history-writing serve to fashion a sense of what proper piety entails, they also contribute to the formation of imaginative frames through which one comes to understand oneself in relation to the past.

Among the variety of potential historical subjects, the *Thūpavaṃsa*s display an evident concern in fashioning the way their readers and listeners envision the Buddha. As a being located in history, the Buddha of Theravāda Buddhism occupies a place of primary importance in medieval historical narratives.[303] Rather than sustaining an ongoing narrative up to the time of

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302 Accordingly, I would argue that too much emphasis has been put on the idea that the Buddhist *vaṃsakathā* establish the historical origins for legitimating the primacy of Buddhism and the Sinhala people in the island. In *The Writing of History*, de Certeau has suggested that history assumes the role of the myth for society when it deals with the "origins" that facilitate the telling of its own story (p. 45). Yet it is highly significant that the "Vijaya Myth," which tells the story of how the Sinhala people came to the island, goes unmentioned or is at least underemphasized in the medieval Buddhist histories. By excluding that story of the social origins of the Sinhala people, the *Thūpavaṃsa*s appear to contradict claims that Buddhist history should be read primarily as charter myths for a particular social group.

303 Scholars have commonly recognized that certain Mahāyāna Buddhist schools of thought depict the Buddha, in contrast, as a transpersonal and transhistorical phenomenon. One need only look at the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Sūtra*, commonly called the "Lotus Sutra," for an account that disputes the historical and transitory existence of Gautama Buddha. Specifically, that text argues that the appearance and death of the Buddha in the world was an illusion used to foster belief and piety among beings of a lesser intellect. While casting the Buddha's historicity in doubt, the Lotus Sutra instead represents the Buddha as claiming to be an immortal presence in the world.

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their compositions, many of the chronicles composed between the tenth and fourteenth centuries C.E. conclude their stories with the establishment of one or another relic within a shrine in Sri Lanka. In this respect, the *Mahāvaṃsa*, with its periodic extension of the narrative to chronicle the deeds of successive kings and queens without ever coming to a definitive end, appears to be exceptional rather than paradigmatic of Buddhist history-writing in Sri Lanka.[304] Moreover, by typically beginning their narratives with the vow Sumedha makes to one day become a Buddha, the medieval *vaṃsakathā* underscore that their narratives revolve around the Buddha's efforts towards increasing the welfare of the beings in the world. These texts situate the life-story of the Buddha within an historical frame that specifically includes medieval readers and listeners of history. Yet while affirming the Buddha's place in history, the *Thūpavaṃsa*s also engage in rhetorically shaping a particular image of the Buddha with respect to the audience. By telling a story wherein the Buddha's career assumes a place of primacy, histories like the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s represent the Buddha to their readers and listeners in a narrative medium that encourages envisioning him and his relics as their "Incomparable Lord."

The Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s both depict the Buddha in marvellous terms, making him a central figure in the narration of history. The

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304 The contrasts between the *Mahāvaṃsa* and the medieval relic chronicles like the *Thūpavaṃsa* are significant and include the open-endedness, concise verse style, and the focus on political reigns of the former in contrast with the narrative closure, elaborate prose, and conspicuous devotional concerns of the latter. Of course, the *Mahāvaṃsa* was itself extended twice in the medieval period after the reigns of Parākramabāhu I (1153-1186) and Parākramabāhu IV (1303-1333). Yet I wish to merely point out that the commonplace assumption that the *Mahāvaṃsa* formed the model of all subsequent chronicles overlooks important points of difference that call into question the validity of claims for a single form of Buddhist history-writing in premodern Sri Lanka.

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Buddha's "biography" however begins in those texts during his existence as Sumedha and may be said to continue after his death with the stories of his relics. Although the extant *Thūpavaṃsa*s were composed in the twelfth and/or thirteenth centuries, the Buddha is acknowledged to have passed away in a condition called *parinirvāṇa* over sixteen centuries earlier. Therefore to tell the story of the Buddha in the medieval *vaṃsakathā* constituted an effort to make him knowable in some sense to an audience who was forced to rely on texts, images, paintings, and relic shrines to remember him. With this fact in mind, it is worth pointing out that part of the rhetorical work of the *Thūpavaṃsa*s was to make the Buddha known and appreciated by their readers and listeners. The angle of vision promoted by the texts renders the Buddha as a figure deserving of both awe and respect. By recalling the Buddha's place in history as the Bodhisattva, Prince Siddhārtha, Gautama Buddha, and in the form of relics, the *Thūpavaṃsa*s work to give rise to an impression of the Buddha that, in turn, encourages feelings of inferiority and dependence in readers and listeners.

A study of the changing conceptualization of the Buddha in Sri Lanka is, to be sure, an ambitious undertaking. There are those, however, who have argued that the Buddha was increasingly characterized as a supramundane figure in the centuries after his *parinirvāṇa*. Toshiichi Endo has documented the increasing tendency to distinguish the Buddha from his enlightened disciples and portray him as superhuman in later stratas of canonical and postcanonical Pāli texts. Therein, descriptions of the Buddha as having omniscient knowledge and having the ability to perform miracles such as the Twin Miracle served to differentiate him from *arahant*s, who were generally not credited with such

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powers in the texts of the *Khuddaka Nikāya*.[305] Likewise, the *Milindapañha* contains statements where the Buddha's knowledge is elevated above that of even the *arahant*s, and that his omniscience reflects a capacity to perceive any object in the past, present, or future once he turns his attention toward it.[306]

The emphasis laid on the extraordinary characteristics of the Buddha developed in the late-canonical and commentarial texts of Theravāda Buddhism is likewise adopted by the *vaṃsakathā*. Thus, for example, the Pāli *Thūpavaṃsa* incorporates a verse found in both *Mahāvaṃsa* XVII. 56 and the *Bāhiranidāna* of the commentary on the *Vinaya*, which reads, "Inconceivable are the Buddhas, inconceivable are the characteristics of the Buddhas, and inconceivable is the fruit for those having serene joy towards inconceivable things."[307] Drawing upon miraculous accounts of what the Buddha did and foretold while he was alive, the *Thūpavaṃsa* reinforces the idea that he is unlike any other being. The text, moreover, copies descriptions of his miraculous attainments and appearance found in earlier works. The rhetorical construction of an impression of the Buddha for later generations is displayed in one instance by quoting the commentary on the Mahāparinibbāna Sutta that describes the Malla kings who lament the Buddha's passing away: "Meritorious One!

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[305] Toshiichi Endo, *Buddha in Theravada Buddhism: A Study of the Concept of Buddha in the Pali Commentaries* (Dehiwala, Sri Lanka: Systematic Print, 1997), pp. 31-33.

[306] Endo, *Buddha in Theravada Buddhism*, pp. 37-40. As Endo points out, the Sandaka Sutta in *Majjhima Nikāya* explicitly devalues omniscient knowledge and notes that a teacher's claim to omniscience is not a basis for living the holy life or attaining the Dhamma among his or her students (i 519).

[307] *Thūp* 200: *Evaṃ acintiyā buddhā buddhadhammā acintiyā*
acintiyesu pasannānaṃ vipāko hoti acintiyo 'ti.
The Pāli *Thūpavaṃsa* appears to have excerpted this verse along with the prose account of the enshrining of the right collar-bone relic in the Thūpārāma from the *Bāhiranidāna*. See also *Sp* 201-202.

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Omniscient One! Before we saw your golden colored body decorated by the Thirty-Two Marks and adorned with the Six-Color Buddha Rays. But now only golden colored relics are left over."[308] Although that speech may be interpreted primarily as an attempt to juxtapose the appearance of relics with the appearance of the living Buddha, it also presents a way of envisioning the Buddha as a being in possession of tremendous merit, unlimited knowledge, and a beautiful physical appearance.

The acts of a Buddha, including those performed previously as the Bodhisattva and posthumously by his relics, are frequently described in the *Thūpavaṃsa*s in extragavant fashion and, as a result, contribute to an image of the Buddha as, roughly speaking, a "Lord" (Sinh: *svāmidaru*) who is incomparable and superhuman. Such a vision of who the Buddha was is not at all incompatible with many of the premodern descriptions found among Buddhist communities in general. To this end, Gómez helpfully suggests that humanistic conceptions of the Buddha as a person just like us may be colored by modern western preconceptions of what is natural to human beings. Instead, in the context of reading the Sanskrit and Chinese versions of the *Sukhāvatīvyūha Sutra*s, he concludes that the image of the Buddha that appears to have been most central to the religious life of premodern Buddhist communities is reflected in the image of a superhuman being who is so distant

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[308] *Thūp* 178: *Bhagavā, sabbaññū, pubbe mayaṃ tumhākaṃ dvattiṃsalakkhaṇapatimaṇḍitaṃ chabbaṇṇabuddharasmikhacitaṃ suvaṇṇavaṇṇaṃ sarīraṃ addasāma, idāni pana suvaṇṇavaṇṇā dhātuyo 'va avasiṭṭhā jātā.* Cf. the nearly identical account in *Sv* II. 609: *Bhagavā, sabbaññū, pubbe mayaṃ tumhākaṃ dvattiṃsa**mahāpurisa**lakkhaṇapatimaṇḍitaṃ chabbaṇṇabuddharasmikhacitaṃ suvaṇṇavaṇṇaṃ sarīraṃ addasāma, idāni pana suvaṇṇavaṇṇa**dhātuyo** 'va avasiṭṭhā jātā.* The boldface word indicates the only major difference between the speech in *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī* and the *Thūpavaṃsa*. Notably, the word "*mahāpurisa*" is also absent in *Thūp2* 31 and *Thūp3* 24, respectively.

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from the condition of ordinary humans that it is difficult to conceive of his humanity.[309] While the Pāli *Thūpavaṃsa* relies a great deal on existing accounts that glorify the Buddha, the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* contributes many new descriptions that continue the trend towards depicting the Buddha in ways that distinguish him from other beings. The latter text consistently emphasizes the Buddha's greatness and the relative incapacity of everyone else. The Buddha's incomparable status is emphasized in the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* in the scene where he proceeds to the Deer Park to give his first sermon:

> [W]hile on the road, an Ājīvika named Upaka, having seen the form of the Venerable One, becoming pleased, said 'Reverend! You, being someone more gentle than the moon, being someone who has more radiance than the sun, being someone deeper than the ocean, being someone steadier than the Great Meru, combining and displaying as much brilliance as there is in all jewels, in all flowers, in all stars, in all lightning flashes, in all rainbows, in all evening clouds, and in all autumn clouds, having looked at the sole of your footprints, even if, having removed the gold from the golden shoots which have risen from the places where rose-apples have fallen from the Great Jambu Tree, mixing and grounding that, there was a solid gold statue which was polished, for the eye of those who have looked upon your form, that [golden] form brings forth displeasure. You who are one hundred times, one thousand times, one hundred-thousand times, ten billion times, an incalculable number of times better that that, who are your teachers?,' and when this was asked, my Svāmidaruvō, while addressing the words which were inquired of him, "Ājīvika! There is no rock which is taller than the Great Meru. There is no well deeper than the great ocean. There is no land larger than the great earth. There is no space more empty than the sky. There are no jackals that are more proud than a maned lion. There are no village pigs that rival musk elephants. There are no fireflies that rival the disk of the moon or the disk of the sun. Therefore similarly there is not even one being equal to me in this whole world. I completely chased away Māra, I completely destroyed all the defilements like a bunch of tiny ants who have come under the foot of an elephant. I filled my mind until I had every virtue of a Buddha. I removed the things which ought to be removed. I acquired the things which ought to be acquired. Now I am going to Bārāṇasi to set forth the Wheel of Dharma, by the invitation of the Great

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309 Gómez, *The Land of Bliss*, pp. 10-11, 31-32.

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> Brahmā Sahampati,' and having thus spoken, coming to the city of Baraṇās on that very day, he went to the Isipatana Monastery.[310]

Herein the narrative is clear that the Buddha is wholly unparalleled in the world. It is precisely his limitless virtues and limitless accomplishments that makes this image of the Buddha so conducive to being understood as an extraordinary being who has acted for the benefit of pious devotees throughout history.

Indeed, by opening its narrative by affirming that the Buddha's virtues are "immeasurable, incomparable, and indescribable," the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* prepares the audience to conceive of the Buddha as an historical agent whose lasting influence in the world defies comprehension.[311] His unlimited knowledge and unlimited powers are emphasized in the *Thūpavaṃsa*s, as these ideas help to explain how he maintains a continuous and efficacious presence in the world through his relics. Trainor has discussed at length the material presence of the Buddha that has been established through historical narratives and ritualized activity concerning bodily relics in Sri Lanka. In spite of the fact

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310 *SThūp* 64-65: *Ataramagadī upaka naṁ ājīvakayā taman vahansēgē rūpaya dāka somnasva, 'Svāmīni! Tepi saňduva vaḍā saumya kenekuva, iruṭa vaḍā tējas āti kenekuva, mūdaṭa vaḍā gāṁburu kenekuva, mahameraṭa vaḍā acala kenekuva, siyaḷu ruvan hi, siyaḷu malhi, siyaḷu taruvehi, siyaḷu viduliyehim siyaḷu dev dunnehi, siyaḷu sandhyāvalāyehi, siyaḷu saratvalāyehi, pāhātāk ekkoṭa aḷalā, piyavara patula balā mahadaṁbagasin daṁbageḍi huṇu huṇu tenin nāñgi ran pāḷayen ran hāragena ē hā ekkoṭa aṁbarā, divīdaḷin op nāgu ghanaran piḷimayak āt namudu topagē ruva bāluvan āsaṭa ē rū aruci elavayi. Īṭa vaḍā siya guṇen dahasak lakṣayak guṇen prakoṭi guṇen asaňkhya guṇen tepi yahapat vuva, topagē guruhu kavurudā' yi vicāḷa kalhi, ū vicāḷa basaṭa māgē svāmidaruvāṇan vahansē vadāraṇa sēk, 'Ājīvakaya! Maha meraṭa vaḍā us vū galek nāta. Mahāsāgarayaṭa vaḍā gāṁburu vū ḷiňdek nāta. Maha poḷovaṭa vaḍā mahat goḍek nāta. Ahasaṭa vaḍā mahat sīs tānek nāta. Kēśara siňhayaṇṭa vāḍi darpavatva siṭi kāṇahillu nāta. Gandha hastīn hā spardhākaraṇa gamhūrō nāta. Saňda maňḍulu hira maňḍulu hā spardhā karana kadōpāṇiyō nāta. Marahu luhubaňdavā pīmi, siyalu kelesun āt payaṭa van kihiṁbi kāla sē nasāpīmi. Siyaḷu buduguṇa ātitāk mā sit purāgatmi. Haḷamanā dā haḷimi, gatamanā dā gatimi. Dān sahampati mahā brahmayāgē ārādhanāyen bārāṇasiyaṭa damsak pavatvaṇṭa yemi' yi vadārā, edāma baraṇās nuvaraṭa avut isipatana vihārayaṭa vāḍi sēka.*

311 *SThūp* 1: *Siyalu aparimita vū atulya vū avācya vū guṇayen yukta vū ē budurajāṇan vahansē.*

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that the Theravāda tradition affirms that the Buddha passed away completely without remainder, he notes that the legacy of his corporeal remains and the establishment of relic shrines testify to a dominant theme of the great and enduring benefits that the Buddha has granted to the inhabitants of Sri Lanka.[312] Although tradition states that the survival of his relics will not last beyond five thousand years, the presumption that they continue to exist and may perform miracles after the Buddha's passing illustrates an attempt to persuade readers and listeners of Buddhist history to recognize an equivalence between the Buddha and his relics.

The *Thūpavaṃsa*s strive to achieve this effect by portraying the relics in terms associated with the living Buddha and also by juxtaposing the imagery of both. Indeed, the Buddha's relics are often described in extraordinary ways that are analogous to the Buddha himself. As we have seen above, the relics of the Buddha exude a golden color like his body when he was living in the world. More revealing, however, is the accounts of relics that display miracles in imitation of the Twin Miracle performed by the Buddha. When the collar-bone relic is enshrined in the Thūpārāma, the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s describe how it ascends into the air and emits streams of fire and water in imitation of the Buddha's Twin Miracle performed near the Gaṇḍamba tree.[313] A similar miracle is performed by the *droṇa* of relics at the Mahāthūpa, as they are said to have risen into the sky, assumed the form of the Buddha, and emitted streams of

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312 Kevin Trainor, *Relics, Ritual, and Representation in Buddhism: Rematerializing the Sri Lankan Theravāda Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 187-188.

313 *Thūp* 67, 199-200; *SThūp* 105. Cf. *Mhv* XVII. 43-45.

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fire and water while displaying a number of such miracles.[314] Moreover, when the relics descend from the sky, they settle upon the couch that was set up in the relic chamber in imitation of the Buddha lying down.[315] All of these parallel images suggest that the relics can be thought of as the Buddha and are likewise able to perform extraordinary miracles. In this way, the texts may argue that acts of devotion to the relics by devotees in the medieval period are just as efficacious as venerating the living Buddha in the past. The Pāli *Thūpavaṃsa* states that conclusion directly:

> Were one to honor the living Well-Gone One with reverence, and were a person to honor a relic even the size of a mustard seed, realizing that when the serene joy in mind is the same, the fruit of their merit is equal, the wise one should honor a relic even after the Well-Gone One has passed away in Nirvana.[316]

After having alluded to the idea that the corporeal relics are equivalent to the Buddha in terms of their appearance and the miracles they perform, the text subsequently forwards the claim that relics should also be worshipped as the living Buddha.[317] As such, the texts reveal a tendency towards using language and imagery designed to make their readers and listeners think of relics as if they are the Buddha himself.

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314 *Thūp* 133, 246; *SThūp* 186.

315 *Thūp* 134, 246; *SThūp* 187.

316 *Thūp* 247: *Tiṭṭhantaṃ sugataṃ tilokamahitaṃ yo pūjaye sādaraṃ*
yo vā sāsapabījamattam pi taṃ dhātuṃ naro pūjaye,
tesaṃ puññaphalaṃ samānam iti taṃ cittappasāde same
ñatvā taṃ parinibbute pi sugate dhātuṃ budho pūjaye 'ti.

317 Trainor notes that the functional equivalence of the Buddha and his relics is suggested in at least two commentarial texts, wherein the act of destroying a relic shrine is taken to be as grave an offence as harming a Buddha and the failure to worship at a shrine is equal to neglecting to attend upon the living Buddha. See Trainor, *Relics, Ritual, and Representation in Buddhism*, pp. 93-94.

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Throughout the narratives of the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s we see evidence of how language is used to give rise to particular readings and interpretations of the past. Yet, at the same time, these narratives display attempts to condition ways of understanding oneself and the world, wherein the events of the past are seen to have an influence over both. We might say that while Buddhist histories recall the past, they also work to instill habits of relating to history in general. The *Thūpavaṃsa*s direct their readers and listeners to see themselves as being personally affected by the past, in part, since the contemporary present is inextricably linked to what happened previously. In representing the past as a matter of considerable relevance and importance, Buddhist histories assume a role in shaping the devotional lives of practitioners. The texts prepare the audience to become good readers who are capable of understanding the significance of the past and liable to conclude that relic veneration carries beneficial effects. Rhetorical uses of language in the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s may thus be understood as strategies by which an audience is prepared to be transformed by their narratives. When readers and listeners come to realize the nature of the Buddha and how they are related to him, they are put in a position to think and feel differently with respect to what he has done before. As we will see next, having been encouraged to adopt the point of view in the narratives of the *Thūpavaṃsa*s, readers and listeners are prepared to experience ethically productive emotions that are prefigured and produced by these same texts.

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CHAPTER FOUR

THE AESTHETICS OF THE *THŪPAVAṂSAS*

In the preceding pages we have outlined how the Pali and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s were produced and conceived of as literary works in medieval Sri Lanka. The selective use of a variety of sources in Pāli and Sinhala by writers such as Vācissara Thera and Parākrama Paṇḍita reveals that such chroniclers were not merely engaged in copying and re-presenting a single text, but actually were creatively authoring new narratives designed to transform an audience who encountered the texts. As we have shown, the *Thūpavaṃsa*s indicate that their narratives were written to give rise to certain effects in readers and listeners. Chapter three described how language is used rhetorically in the *Thūpavaṃsa*s to prefigure and condition ways of thinking about the past. Yet, in addition to instructing the audience on the value of moral acts and other doctrinal points, the *Thūpavaṃsa*s also work to engender a type of historical consciousness wherein the contemporary reader or listener is brought into a direct and intimate association with the Buddha. Specifically, the past acts of the Buddha are depicted as having been done on behalf of readers and listeners of the texts. Thus, an examination of these texts also suggests that the aesthetic use of language was as crucial to Buddhist history-writing as rhetorical usage. In other words, the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s illustrate how historical narratives were also directed at giving rise to emotional dispositions that would contribute to the moral agency of their readers and listeners.

As works of literature composed with attention to the imaginative and emotional effects of their narratives, the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s

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represent historical texts directed at changing the present through recalling stories from the past. Indeed, the strongest argument for considering Sri Lanka's *vaṃsa*s to be "Buddhist" histories is that they prefigure a relationship between text and audience designed to produce emotions that are valued for achieving desired ethical and soteriological ends. Buddhist histories produce knowledgeable and affected readers and listeners, who respond emotionally to what they learn from the texts. Put simply, the medieval *vaṃsa*s of Sri Lanka display a clear intention to improve the present and future lives of the people who encounter their narratives by making them see and feel that they are the beneficiaries of history. Once included in the narrative of history, readers and listeners are led to respond emotionally to the realization that the acts of the Buddha and other virtuous monks and kings in the past serve their own interests as well. The *Thūpavaṃsa*s therefore articulate intentions and goals that are consistent with Buddhist ideals widely expressed in medieval Theravāda literature. Specifically, they endorse and encourage the accumulaton of merit and progress along the path towards heaven and Nirvana.[318]

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318 We may note that Pāli and Sinhala Buddhist texts frequently link the attainment of "heaven" (P: *sagga*; Sinh: *saga*) with that of "release" (P: *mokkha*; Sinh: *mok*) in a coordinate compound that implies that rebirth in heaven is also a desireable and legitimate aspiration for Buddhists. Regarding the propriety of heaven as a goal, Steven Collins has noted that neither monasticism nor Nirvana was represented in Theravāda literature as the sole or even primary goals for every man and woman. Instead, Theravāda Buddhism has traditionally expressed a wide variety of forms of the good life, including a range of worldly and otherworldly felicities such as rebirth in heaven or rebirth on earth during the time of Metteya (Sinh: Maitreya) Buddha. See his *Nirvana and Other Buddhist Felicities*, pp. 19, 101, 110.

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IV. 1 THE CONSTRUCTION OF EMOTIONS IN BUDDHIST HISTORY

Although the medieval *vaṃsa*s characteristically exhort their audiences to engage in meritorious actions, there is also a recognition that the texts themselves make people good by giving rise to thoughts, feelings, and acts that are conducive to the welfare of oneself and others. Medieval Sri Lankan Buddhists, informed by their own literary tradition and the *alaṅkāra* theories of Sanskrit poetics, were keenly aware of the transformative power of texts. As such, Buddhist history-writing evidently worked to implicate their readers and listeners in a relationship with the past through which they are made to feel happy and grateful for what others have done. The *Thūpavaṃsa*s explicitly recognize the value of ethically productive emotions and therefore strive to replicate such feelings in their readers and listeners through the aesthetic use of language in their narratives. Among the most valued of those emotions are serene joy (P: *pasāda*), profound disquiet (P: *saṃvega*), pious confidence (P:*saddhā*) and gratitude (P: *kataññutā*), as they are connected with generalized emotional states not limited to the sensuous experiences of an individual. In other words, the above emotions are emphasized and celebrated by Buddhist histories since they are conducive to virtuous acts of giving alms, veneration, and renunciation.

The importance of emotions in Buddhist history-writing has generally been overlooked by modern scholars. Moreover, their desire to read the *vaṃsa*s as historical documents has precluded scholars from seriously considering any notion of textual agency whereby works such as the *Thūpavaṃsa*s are credited with the power to transform persons and improve

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their lot in life in this world and in the next. Thus, while many have acknowledged the explicit aim of several Buddhist histories to arouse serene joy, profound disquiet, and pious confidence in their audiences, there has been no corresponding attempt to evaluate the role attributed to emotions by the authors and scribes of the *vaṃsakathā*. One reason for this, perhaps, is the overwhelming tendency for modern western thought to contrast and devalue emotion with respect to reason and analytical thought. Catherine Lutz has shown that western psychosocial theory generally classifies emotion as a natural product of an individual's subjective self, and thus is inferior to the objectivity of rational thought.[319] In other words, emotion is located within a person's particular drives and impulses, occuring naturally and predictably in response to certain stimuli. Feelings of happiness or sadness, then, are thought to well up inside ourselves in a manner beyond our control. The uncontrollable and irrational qualities that western thought attributes to emotion is responsible, moreover, for the resulting tendency to contrast emotion with the allegedly rational and objective nature of moral awareness.[320] Indeed, in that view, emotion constitutes a threat to moral development since one's feelings may move a person to compromise moral codes when acting in the "heat of the moment," so to speak.

Working on the premise that emotion constitutes an important cultural category, a number of scholars have recently published their findings that depict emotions in India as socially constructed phenomena. Like Lutz, they locate the

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319 See Catherine Lutz, "Emotion, Thought, and Estrangement: Emotion as a Cultural Category," *Cultural Anthropology* 1, no. 3 (Aug. 1986), pp. 289-295.

320 Lutz, "Emotion, Thought, and Estrangement," pp. 302-304.

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origins of emotion not in the passive experience of an individual's physiology, but rather in the appraisals of situations based on culturally transmitted beliefs and values.[321] In this view, an emotional reaction of happiness or sadness is predicated upon the way one evaluates a given event. One might feel either pity or anger, for example, at a poor man who steals food from one's garden, depending in part upon how one is conditioned to view personal property and the plight of strangers. Instead of relating emotions to feelings that are subjectively produced, one would do well to acknowledge that the interpretations and judgements that people give to events are supplied in large part by the society and traditions around them. As cognitive rather than physical products, emotions are conditioned by the appraisals one learns to give to particular situations and are thus not identifiable with mere sensations that naturally arise.[322] The suggestion that emotions are socially constructed is useful for our study of Buddhist histories since it permits us to view emotions more specifically as a product of literature. The *Thūpavaṃsa*s, in this way, can work to evoke particular emotions by supplying appraisals to situations in which their readers and listeners find themselves. In other words, the texts tutor an audience on how one should feel with respect to one's relationship with the Buddha and others in the past. Accordingly, in what follows, we will see how historical narratives work to condition emotional responses through the use of both descriptive and dramatic uses of language in recalling history.

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321 Owen M. Lynch, "The Social Construction of Emotion in India," in *Divine Passions: The Social Construction of Emotion in India*, ed. Owen M. Lynch (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990), p. 8.

322 Lynch, "The Social Construction of Emotion in India," pp. 10-11.

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One of the underlying assumptions herein is that the authors of medieval Buddhist histories were aware that their works could have transformative effects upon a prospective audience of monastics and laypersons. History-writing in Sri Lanka typically displays a recognition that the *vaṃsa*s could and would have profound ethical and soteriological ramifications upon their audiences. Even among the earliest chronicles we find a clear indication that the authors of Buddhist histories imagined that their audiences would experience strong and positive emotional effects from their narratives. The fourth-century *Dīpavaṃsa*, for example, opens its narrative by calling upon its prospective audience and describing how they should and will respond to the story that follows:

> Listen to me as I will relate the chronicle concerning the coming to the island of the Buddha, the arrival of the relics and Bodhi Tree, the doctrine of the teachers in the Sangha, and the arrival of the Dispensation in the island.
>
> Listen to me attentively, as it produces rapture and delight, should arouse serene joy, is beautiful, and is endowed with various forms.
>
> Carefully receive these faultless and beneficial words with exalted thoughts, being glad, elated, and having minds which are very pleased.[323]

The author of these Pāli verses presents the reader or listener with a list of words that describe what is taken to be the pleasurable experience of

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323 *Dīp* I. 1-3: *Dīpāgamanaṃ buddhassa dhātu ca bodhiyāgamaṃ*
saṃgahācariyavādañ ca dīpamhi sāsanāgamaṃ
narindāgamanaṃ vaṃsaṃ kittayissaṃ suṇātha me.

Pītipāmojjajananaṃ pasādeyyaṃ manoramaṃ
Anekākārasampannaṃ cittikatvā suṇātha me.

Udaggacittā sumanā pahaṭṭhā tuṭṭhamānasā
niddosaṃ bhadravacanaṃ sakkaccaṃ sampaṭicchatha.

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encountering the text.[324] The literary effect of this series of words including *pīti, pāmojja, pasādeyya*, and so forth, is to create a heightened expectation that the audience will take pleasure in reading or listening to the *Dīpavaṃsa*. The verses above suggest that the enjoyment of an historical narrative was critical to Buddhist history-writing. The extent to which ancient audiences actually *did* enjoy this text is, of course, a piece of the past that we shall likely never know. Yet, in as much as the *Dīpavaṃsa* depicts an association commonly made between historical narratives and emotions, encounters with Buddhist histories in premodern Sri Lanka might fairly be said to involve the transformation of how readers and listeners feel with regards to the past.[325]

The self-awareness of the author's role in composing history was likewise made explicit in the narratives of other *vaṃsa*s, suggesting that the above verses from the *Dīpavaṃsa* served to cast the subsequent practice of history-writing as, in large part, an endeavor in generating beneficial emotional states. The fifth or sixth-century *Mahāvaṃsa*, although generally taken to have improved upon the poor literary quality of the older chronicle, still portrays its effects upon an audience in similar terms. Nearly every chapter of this text ends

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[324] My decision to attribute the first three verses of the text to the work of one individual should not mask the fact that there has been a lack of consensus among scholars over whether the *Dīpavaṃsa* is the work of one or more authors. In *The Pāli Literature of Ceylon*, Malalasekera maintains that the multiple versions of single events found in the *Dīpavaṃsa* is due to the fact that it was not the work of one author, but rather took its shape over several generations by succeeding authors (p. 135). Geiger, on the other hand, argues in his *The Dīpavaṃsa and Mahāvaṃsa* that the ancient text in its extant version was the work of one author who included different recensions of the historical record side by side in order to give the complete picture of the past as he received it (p. 68). In either case, I believe that the obvious coherence between the above three verses and their placement in the beginning of the text justifies attributing them to one author.

[325] Cf. a benedictory line from the thirteenth-century *Dāṭhāvaṃsa* that reads "the History of the Tooth Relic of the Conqueror was compiled as a lamp illuminating the power of the Omniscient One, producing serene joy in listeners." See *Dāṭh* 151, v. 6: *Sotuppasādajanano jinadantadhātu vaṃso kato nikhiladassipabhāvadīpo.*

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with a statement affirming that the *Mahāvaṃsa* "was was composed for the sake of serene joy and profound disquiet in virtuous persons."[326] Further, its opening verses also call upon its listeners to generate *pasāda* and *saṃvega* in the places that produce serene joy and effect profound disquiet.[327] Unfortunately the terse style of these ancient verse narratives offer us little more than explicit invocations to feel these emotions. They signal the attempt to produce affective experiences in an audience but, in comparison with the *Thūpavaṃsa*s, they do not reveal much in the way of the nature of these emotions or how they might be produced by the texts.

The terms *pasāda* and *saṃvega* are rather complex technical terms that carry many shades of meaning. In an attempt to clarify them, Collins has brought to light an important aspect in both these emotional states, namely that they arise in response to something outside of oneself and thus they are not simply self-induced feelings. He notes that *pasāda*, which is often said to occur at Buddhist *stūpa*s, refers to "a clarity of mind, calmness, and conviction in the religious value of what or who evokes the feeling," while *saṃvega* is a somewhat more intense emotion experienced "when some shock inspires an increase in the intensity of religious feelings and intentions."[328] For his part, Ananda Guruge explains the use of the term *pasāda* by noting that it refers "to the act of being pleased with, being inclined towards and being convinced or

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326 The conventional phrase which appears before the name of most chapters in the *Mahāvaṃsa* reads "*sujanappasādasaṃvegatthāya kate mahāvaṃse. . .*," and appears in the locative case modified by the title of the particular chapter in each instance.

327 *Mhv* I. 4.

328 Collins, *Nirvana and Other Buddhist Felicities*, p. 593, n. 2. While I concur with the glosses that Collins gives to these terms, I shall translate these terms as "serene joy" and "profound disquiet" in the place of his "serene confidence" and "animation," respectively.

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converted,"and thus the faith-based descriptions of miraculous events in the *Mahāvaṃsa* were conceivably intended to convince an audience of the growing glory of Buddhism in Sri Lanka.[329] The term *saṃvega*, according to Guruge, signifies "the religious emotion arising out of a feeling of empathy as regard the miseries of the world."[330] Furthermore, we can clarify what the latter term has meant in the Theravāda tradition of Sri Lanka when we note, for example, how the word "*dharma-saṃvegaya*" is used roughly in the sense of "an intense realization of the nature of impermanence." This term becomes illustrated in the Sinhala *Daḷadā Sirita* by the Mahathera Mahasup (P: Mahakassapa) who is said to feel *dharma-saṃvegaya* when he venerates the resplendent feet of the recently deceased Buddha lying on the funeral pyre.[331]

The renowned Theravāda commentator Buddhaghosa, writing in the fifth century C.E. between the compositions of the *Dīpavaṃsa* and *Mahāvaṃsa*, supplied his own explanations of *saṃvega* and *pasāda* in his authoritative compilation called the *Visuddhimagga*. While it should be noted that his glosses of these two Pāli words appear in a section devoted to the "arising of the constituent factors of enlightenment" (*sambojjhaṅgassa uppādāya*) such as tranquility, concentration, and equanimity, and thus seem to be specifically directed to a monastic audience concerned with meditation, it

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329 Ananda W. P. Guruge, trans., *Mahāvaṃsa: The Great Chronicle of Sri Lanka* (Colombo:Associated Newspapers of Ceylon, 1989), pp. 67-68.

330 Guruge, *Mahāvaṃsa*, p. 67. Note that Guruge also glosses this term with the words "agitation, fear, anxiety, and thrill."

331 *DḷSir* 14. As such, the fact that the word *saṃvega* is used in the context of paying respect to the Buddha who had recently passed away should indicate something of the implied strength of this emotion. Cf. *Pjv* 586, wherein the Buddha himself is said to have arrived at "*dharmasaṃvēgaya*" upon seeing the relics of his deceased stepmother Mahāprajāpati Gotamī.

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appears that his glosses have had a lasting effect upon how Sri Lankan Buddhists have understood these concepts more generally:

> How does 'one make the mind glad when the mind ought to be glad?' Whenever the mind is dull either by a deficiency in the means of wisdom or by the non-attainment of the happiness of serenity, then that one arouses profound disquiet by the reflection on the eight objects [causing] profound disquiet. The eight objects [causing] profound disquiet are described as, 'Birth, old-age, sickness, and death are four, the suffering in the miserable states of existence is fifth, the suffering originating in the cycle of rebirth in the past, the suffering originating in the cycle of rebirth in the future, and the suffering originating in the search for food in the present.' And by recalling the virtues of the Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha, serene joy is produced for that person.[332]

Buddhaghosa's description of profound disquiet and serene joy appears to have contributed to the glosses put forward by the author of the *Vaṃsatthappakāsinī* in commenting upon the opening verse in the *Mahāvaṃsa* concerning the generation of *pasāda* and *saṃvega* in its audience. Regarding the first word the text reads, "Herein as for 'serene joy,' it is the serene joy and pious confidence that arise on account of being convinced of the virtues of the Triple Gem."[333] Thereupon, it describes the word *saṃvega* thus, "As for 'profound disquiet,' it is the knowledge produced by the profound disquiet that has arisen by thinking such things as 'the conditioning factors [*saṅkhārā*] that have arisen, not being in existence, arise together; and coming to be, they go to dissolution."[334] In other

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332 *Vism* IV. 63: *Kathaṃ yasmiṃ samaye cittaṃ sampahaṃsitabbaṃ tasmiṃ samaye cittaṃ sampahaṃseti? Yadā 'ssa paññāpayogamandatāya vā upasamasukhānadhigamena vā nirassādaṃ cittaṃ hoti, tadā naṃ aṭṭhasaṃvegavatthupaccavekkhaṇena saṃvejeti. Aṭṭhasaṃvegavatthūni nāma: jātijarābyādhimaraṇāni cattāri, apāyadukkhaṃ pañcamaṃ, atīte vaṭṭamūlakaṃ dukkhaṃ, anāgate vaṭṭamūlakaṃ dukkhaṃ, paccuppanne āhārapariyeṭṭhimūlakaṃ dukkhan' ti. Buddhadhammasaṅghaguṇānussaraṇena c'assa pasādaṃ janeti.*

333 *Mhv-ṭ* 49: *Ettha pasādo'ti ratanattayaguṇānaṃ saddahanākārena uppannā pasādasaddhā.*

334 *Mhv-ṭ* 49: *Saṃvego 'ti uppannā saṅkhārā ahutvā sambhonti, hutvā paṭivigacchantī 'ti evamādinā nayena uppannaṃ saṃvegamayañāṇaṃ.*

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words, this feeling appears to represent the same personal and powerful realization of transitory existence that the Venerable Mahasup is alleged to have felt when he paid homage to the deceased body of the Buddha.

Moreover, in line with Ananda Coomaraswamy's discussion of the term, the feeling of *saṃvega* also entails the "shock" or recognition that impermanence applies to oneself.[335] By pairing *pasāda* and *saṃvega* together, Buddhaghosa may well have enabled the author of the *Mahāvaṃsa* to combine these two emotions together as the presumed effects of his text. The underlying suggestion from both authors is that serene joy and profound disquiet are not only compatible, but they actually reinforce each other. The profound disquiet that comes from the recognition that one is subject to decay and death like all beings is also taken to lead to serene joy, since one rejoices in the Triple Gem of the Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha for offering a solution to this problem. Put simply, the disturbing realization that I cannot master the world is alleviated by the subsequent recognition that the Buddha has already mastered it for me.[336] His teaching and monastic order are said to help one transcend mundane existence, so that the profound disquiet felt from the shock of recognition that one's existence is transient leads, in turn, to the joyous recognition that the Buddha has discovered this truth already and presented a path to minimize suffering and increase happiness for all beings.

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335 Ananda Coomaraswamy has chosen to render *saṃvega* as "a state of shock" that consists of a phase marked by a physical sensation, followed by a second phase where there is a realization of the meaning that is implicated in the shock which was felt. See Roger Lipsey, ed., *Coomaraswamy: I Selected Papers, Traditional Art and Symbolism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), pp. 182-183.

336 I wish again to acknowledge Charles Hallisey for this phrasing of the idea at hand.

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Writing on the subject of relic veneration in Sri Lankan Buddhism, Trainor also draws attention to the same Pāli passages above in his description of the elevated mental states that are thought to be evoked when one reads or recites the *Mahāvaṃsa*. He notes that these two emotions taken together represent a significant way in which the Theravāda tradition understands the act of going to the Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha for "refuge" (*saraṇa*), and that the textual tradition suggests that the power of the Triple Gem represents a means of transforming the consciousness of the one who goes for refuge.[337] Further, on the topic of *pasāda*, Trainor helpfully points out that "serene joy" embraces both affective and cognitive dimensions that are experienced together in relative degrees depending in large part upon the progress of an individual along the Buddhist path.[338] Thus, although feelings of happiness and serenity are seen to coexist, they may be felt in various degrees by one more inclined to either its affective or cognitive aspect. If meditators are more apt to experience the serenity of *pasāda*, lay devotees may tend to feel more happiness. Generally speaking, however, it appears that *pasāda* was deemed an emotion of considerable importance and relevance since it has been given a place in both meditative experience as well as in devotional practice.

In comparison with the *Mahāvaṃsa*, however, the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s display a greater emphasis on *pasāda* while shifting the focus away from *saṃvega* towards the emotional state of *saddhā* (Sinh: *śraddhāva, sādā*). The Pāli term "*saddhā*," often rendered into English as "faith," is

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337 Trainor, *Relics, Ritual, and Representation in Buddhism*, pp. 82-83.

338 Trainor, *Relics, Ritual, and Representation in Buddhism*, p. 167.

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translated here as "pious confidence" to emphasize how it connotes a feeling of conviction in the Triple Gem.[339] Although the *Mahāvaṃsa* routinely concludes its chapters by claiming they were written to arouse *pasāda* and *saṃvega*, the latter notion of profound disquiet is omitted from the invocations that end several chapters in the Pāli *Thūpavaṃsa*. The word appears only twice in the narrative, first when the gods in the Tusita heaven experience that anxiety upon realizing that the Bodhisattva will pass away from their abode and be reborn one last time on earth, and secondly when Prince Siddhattha sees the three divine messengers who appear in the guises of an old man, a sick man, and a dead man.[340] These episodes appear near beginning of the text and are quite brief, suggesting that the emotion of *saṃvega* has been somewhat devalued for the audience. Instead, the emotional tone of the *Thūpavaṃsa* is captured by a quote of the message allegedly sent from King Asoka to King Devānampiyatissa:

> I have gone to the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha for refuge, and I have come to know lay-discipleship in the Dispensation of the Son of the Sakyas;
>
> Go for refuge, O' Best of Men, in these three highest treasures, with pious confidence [*saddhāya*], arousing serene joy [*pasādayitvāna*] in mind.[341]

The above quote illustrates more generally how Vācissara Thera tends to deemphasize the profound disquiet and shock associated with *saṃvega* in favor

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339 For an argument against the use of "faith" as a translation of *saddhā* because of its misleading Christian connotations, see Edith Ludowyk-Gyomroi, "The Valuation of Saddhā in Early Buddhist Texts," *University of Ceylon Review* V, no. 2, (Oct. 1947): 32-49.

340 *Thūp* 164-165.

341 *Thūp* 194: *Ahaṃ buddhañ ca dhammañ ca saṅghañ ca saraṇaṃ gato*
upāsakattaṃ vedesiṃ sakyaputtassa sāsane.

Imesu tīsu vatthūsu uttamesu naruttama
cittaṃ pasādayitvāna saddhāya saraṇaṃ vajā 'ti.

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of the devotional confidence of *saddhā*. We might then infer from this strategy that Vācissara Thera, like many other chroniclers in the medieval period, was especially concerned to compose a text that would generate emotions to condition a range of dispositions and behavior in a wide audience of monastics and laypersons. As the narrative of the *Thūpavaṃsa* suggests, *saṃvega* is an emotion that is particularly suited for inspiring a householder to renounce lay life. The anxiety that accompanies the powerful realization of impermanence is generally understood to lead to an intensification of religious feeling, and a corresponding desire to devote oneself to a life of renunciation.[342]

Yet *saddhā* is an emotion that is traditionally valued for all Buddhists, whether they are highly attained monks or laypersons who make simple offerings to relics. John Ross Carter, for his part, hints at its wider relevance by describing *saddhā* as an emotion consisting of reliance on the wisdom of the Buddha and the expectation that his path, if followed diligently, will yield great fruits.[343] The Theravāda textual tradition has similarly praised pious confidence as a highly valuable and efficacious emotion. The commentary to the Āḷavaka Sutta in the *Paramatthajotikā* explains in detail why *saddhā* is the "best wealth" in this world:

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342 A "life of renunciation" here refers not only to monastic life, but also to the lives of male and female lay-disciples (P: *upāsaka; upāsikā*). The sense of the impermanence of life as a motivating factor for piety is perhaps most clearly seen at Buddhist temples today in Sri Lanka, where even a casual observer will notice how the elderly are usually over-represented among the laypersons in attendance. To that end, Richard Gombrich and Gananath Obeyesekere note in *Buddhism Transformed: Religious Change in Sri Lanka* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988) that the people who habitually wear white clothes and observe the eight or ten precepts at temples are older and often widowed (p. 25).

343 John Ross Carter, *Dhamma: Western Academic and Sinhalese Buddhist Interpretations, A Study of a Religious Concept* (Tokyo: Hokuseido Press, 1978), p. 104. We might briefly note, moreover, that the word *saddhā* appears in conjunction with *sīla* ("morality") in the description of the virtues ascribed to the senior Thera who requested Vācissara to write the *Thūpavaṃsa* in the first place (*Thūp* 254).

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> Thereupon, the Meritorious One, while answering in just the manner answered [previously] by the Ten-Powered One named Kassapa, spoke this stanza: 'Pious confidence is the wealth in this world.' Therein it should be understood that just as wealth such as gold and money is conducive to the happiness of pleasure and the objects of pleasure, wards off suffering such as hunger and thirst, alleviates poverty, is a condition for the acquisition of treasures such as pearls, etc., and is conducive to the maintenance of the world, so then worldly and world-transcending pious confidence [*lokiyalokuttarā saddhā*] is conducive to the happiness of worldly and world-transcending results in accordance with their production. It wards off the suffering associated with birth, old, age, etc., among those who fare along with the yoke of pious confidence. It alleviates the poverty of virtues and is the condition for the acquisition of treasures such as the Constitutents of Enlightenment. And it is conducive to the maintenance of the world, as it is said,
>
> 'Having pious confidence, endowed with morality, and having relinquished fame and wealth, one is honored in whatever place one associates.'
>
> And having explained it thus, they have referred to it as 'wealth.'[344]

In the light of that evaluation of *saddhā*, the desire for the authors of the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s to evoke pious confidence in their audiences may be understood in terms of how that emotion is valued for living a religious life in accordance with Buddhist teachings. Pious confidence also has a role in encounters with Buddhist history, as it relates to having confidence in the efficacy of the Buddha's deeds in the past. In short, having confidence that the historical events leading up to the enshrining of relics in Sri Lanka were

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344 *Pj II* I. 231: *Ath' assa bhagavā kassapadasabalena vissajitanayen' eva vissajjento imaṃ gātham āha: saddh' īdha vittan ti. Tattha, yathā hiraññasuvaṇṇādivittaṃ upabhogaparibhogasukhaṃ āvahati khuppipāsādidukkhaṃ paṭibāhati dāliddiyaṃ vūpasameti muttādiratanapaṭilābhahetu hoti lokasannatiñ ca āvahati, evaṃ lokiyalokuttarā saddhā pi yathāsambhavaṃ lokiyalokuttaravipākasukham āvahati, saddhādhurena paṭipannānaṃ jātijarādidukkhaṃ paṭibāhati, guṇadāliddiyaṃ vūpasameti, sambojjhaṅgādiratanapaṭilābhahetu hoti,*

"saddho sīlena sampanno yasobhogasamappito
yaṃ yaṃ padesaṃ bhajati, tattha tatth' eva pūjito" ti

vacanato lokasannatiñ ca āvahatī ti katvā vittan ti vuttā.

See also *Sn* 32, v. 182 for the *sutta* on which the above commentarial gloss was made.

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purposefully planned and undertaken by the Buddha allows one to rejoice in the benefits one has received.

Despite the fact that certain emotions could be variously emphasized in the *vaṃsakathā* of Sri Lanka, it is worth recalling that they were taken to entail mental as well as emotional effects in an individual. The arousing of generalized emotions is frequently represented in terms of a transformation in the way a person thinks and feels. Thus, the serene joy that is said to arise when reflecting on the virtues of the Triple Gem is capable of producing both happiness and intellectual clarity.[345] The profound disquiet, or "shock of recognition," that comes from contemplating the transient nature of all phenomena is generally characterized by both anxiety and insight. The pious confidence that is inspired (or reinforced) by witnessing a miracle may provide happiness and assurance while dispelling doubt or overcoming arrogance.[346] The chronicles frequently depict these states as complex experiences that modify the emotional and mental states of humans and other beings. Therefore, we

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345 Trainor, *Relics, Ritual, and Representation in Buddhism*, p. 167. In addition to serene joy, the word *pasāda* can also be rendered as "clearness" or "brightness," both of which signify a vibrant and perceptive mental state.

346 Trainor, *Relics, Ritual, and Representation in Buddhism*, p. 164. Note that *SThūp* mentions how the right collar-bone relic imitated the living Buddha who performed numerous types of miracles, including the Twin Miracle (*yamaka prātihāryya*), to "overcome" the arrogance of heretics (*tīrthakayangē māna mardanaya piṇisa*), p. 105. See also the *Dāṭhāvaṃsa*, wherein a king named Paṇḍu, having been misled by heretics, is finally convinced of the virtues of the Buddha after repeated performances of miracles by the Buddha's Tooth Relic. The king's transformation is confirmed and described in the following two verses: "Thereupon the leader of the army, most delighted, going up to the ditch [where the Tooth Relic had been put], and while venerating the relic of the Lord of Sages and conferring the blessing of the king, requested thus, 'Having abandoned the long-lasting filth of false views, the ruler has obtained pious conviction in the Well-faring One. And coming to the palace, may you increase the serene joy of this king toward the Triple Gem.' See *Dāṭh* III. vv. 81-82: *Gantvā tato so parikhāsamīpaṃ/ senādhinatho paramappatīto/ dhātuṃ munindassa namassamāno/ ajjhesi rañño hitam ācaranto./ Cirāgataṃ diṭṭhimalaṃ pahāya/ alattha saddhaṃ sugate narindo/ pāsādam āgamma pasādam assa/ vaḍḍhehi rañño ratanattayamhi.*

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shall argue that this acknowledged connection between the affective and cognitive in traditional understandings of *pasāda*, *saṃvega*, and *saddhā* can be expressed analytically by the transformation of the manners in which the audience feels and thinks when encountering the narratives of medieval Buddhist histories.

Yet there remains a need to show how the generation of valued emotions was envisioned to occur specifically through encounters with literature. Fortunately, a reading of the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s may supply us with a theoretical understanding of how Buddhist history-writing in medieval Sri Lanka was equipped with strategies to accomplish aesthetic effects in an audience. As such, we might further suggest that medieval Sri Lankan Buddhists not only located the power to transform individuals in the Triple Gem, but also that at least some chroniclers viewed their texts as productive of experiences that could change the emotional and imaginative realities of persons in such a way as to make them virtuous.[347] By taking seriously the claims and allusions of texts such as the *Thūpavaṃsa*s that they were composed for the sake of producing serene joy and faith in their audiences, we can begin to see

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[347] The productive role of Theravāda Buddhist literature has recently been analyzed by Steven Collins, who makes use of the French term "imaginaire" to discuss the role of Pāi texts in creating durable, discursive frames which guided thought and action in the premodern civilizations of South and Southeast Asia. He explicates this idea by referring to the "Pāli imaginaire" as a "mental universe created by and within Pāli texts," and which assumed an important role as that through which people in South and Southeast Asia thought about and experienced the material world in which they lived. By introducing this concept, Collins attempts to instill an awareness of how Buddhist texts projected an ideology which was adopted and maintained by elites in the monastic and political spheres of the region, and which ultimately contributed to the development of ordered civilizations in Sri Lanka and in the territories which later became the nation-states of Burma, Thailand, Cambodia, and Laos. See Collins, *Nirvana and Other Buddhist Felicities*, pp. 41, 73-74. My emphasis on the role of Pāli and Sinhala histories in evoking emotional and imaginative responses that structures devotional practice differs from the emphasis of Collins, but I find his argument on the effects of texts to be an important step forward in the task of understanding the uses and effects of premodern Buddhist texts.

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that medieval Sri Lankans conceived their histories to be textual agents that could, and in all expectations would, effect the ethical transformation of individual Buddhists who read or listened to them. The Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s presuppose that an individual reader or listener will be made to think and feel in certain ways after encountering their respective narratives. The model reader or listener who is thus foreseen and created by the *Thūpavaṃsa*s is envisioned as an individual who is transformed by their narratives into a moral agent—namely, a "virtuous person," (P: *sappurisa*; Sinh: *satpuruṣa*).[348] Moreover, the virtuous persons anticipated to encounter the *Thūpavaṃsa*s are explicitly described in terms of the emotional states that are produced by the texts themselves.

Yet why are emotions such as serene joy, pious confidence, astonishment and gratitude valued and emphasized in the characters and the audiences of the *Thūpavaṃsa*s? The conspicuous suggestions that these texts produce emotions reflect an abiding concern in the Theravāda tradition to show how certain emotional states are morally wholesome and productive of a variety of Buddhist felicities such as favorable rebirths and divine happiness. A stanza in the Ākaṅkheyya Sutta of *Majjhima Nikāya* suggests as much when it remarks that a monk could expect to live a morally righteous life if, among other things, he should wish, "When relations and blood relations remember me

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348 I will employ the Sinhala term *satpuruṣa* throughout the text to refer to the readers and listeners who are anticipated and transformed by Buddhist history. I have made this decision because of the singular consistency with which this term is found in the Sinhala *vaṃsakathā*. In contrast, the audiences in Pāli histories are sometimes also similarly referred to as "*sujana*," "*sādhujana*," and "*ariyajana*." Thus, the fact that Buddhist histories written in Sinhala overwhelmingly refer to their imagined audiences as *satpuruṣa*s suggests that this word acquired considerable currency as a technical term used for persons anticipated to encounter those texts.

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while having a serenely joyful mind after I have passed away and departed, may that be a great fruit and a great benefit to them."[349] In this sense, recalling and rejoicing in another's virtue carries benefits even for those who do not engage in such virtuous action as renunciation. Furthermore, a verse in the medieval Sinhala poem *Lō Vāḍa Saňgarāva* illustrates how emotion is thought to have soteriological implications for the person who feels it:

> Without thinking that the merit from alms is a difficult thing [to achieve],
> Rejoice in the merit done by another.
> Obtaining merit equal to the merit earned by them,
> does it not effect the happiness of heaven and release brought forth from that [rejoicing]?[350]

That verse clearly suggests that merely arousing a positive emotion in one's mind enables an individual to enjoy great rewards. In other words, the poem maintains that to feel happy about the merit gained by another person through moral action likewise entitles one to enjoy an equivalent amount of merit. In effect, becoming happy while witnessing another's piety is said to constitute a morally productive act for oneself.[351] Emotions are therefore important since

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[349] *M* I 6: *Ākaṅkheyya ce bhikkave bhikkhu: ye me ñātisālohitā petā kālakatā pasannacittā anussaranti tesaṃ taṃ mahapphalaṃ assa mahānisaṃsan ti, sīlesv ev' assa paripūrikārī ajjhattaṃ cetosamatham anuyutto anirākatajjhāno vipassanāya samannāgato brūhetā suññāgārānaṃ.* Note that Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi have translated this line differently by taking the words "passed away and departed" to refer to the monk's relatives who then remember him in their subsequent lives. See Ñāṇamoli and Bodhi, trans., *The Middle Length Sayings of the Buddha: A New Translation of the* Majjhima Nikāya (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1995), pp. 115, 1178. In either case, the *sutta* underscores the potency of *pasāda* as a productive emotion for religious life.

[350] *Lōv*, v. 58: *Dan pin bāridēkāyi nositannē*
an kaḷa piṅ anumōdan vannē
un kaḷa pin sari pin lāba gannē
in vada saga mok sāpa sādannē?

[351] Again, the *Lō Vāḍa Saňgarāva* illustrates this idea by describing how a person who witnessed the donation of the Jetavana monastery to the Buddha and rejoiced in the merit earned by the rich donor actually gained more merit for his feelings than did the donor for his gift. See *Lōv*, v. 129. For a related discussion on the role of *pasāda* as a disposition triggered by another's meritorious act, see Jean Filliozat, "Puṇya and its Semantic Field," in his *Religion Philosophy Yoga* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1991), pp. 244-245.

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they can profoundly shape the nature and quality of one's present and future lives.

Furthermore, the Theravāda tradition has traditionally linked emotions to states of mind that contribute to one's moral agency. The relevance of emotions to the performance of morally sanctioned conduct was recognized and restated in some Abhidhamma handbooks that were roughly contemporary with the medieval *vaṃsakathā*. For instance, in his translation of the *Abhidhammattha Saṅgaha*, Bhikkhu Bodhi notes that "wholesome states of mind" (*kusala-citta*) may be glossed by feelings of joy or equanimity, are said to inhibit mental defilements, and are known to produce good results.[352] Such mental states are rooted in and accompanied by generosity, loving-kindness, and wisdom, and thus are distinguished from any feelings of pleasure that may be associated with morally unwholesome (*akusala*) activity.[353] The *Nāmarupasamāsa* meanwhile notes that *kusala-cittas* lead directly to the attainment of numerous ethical virtues such as meditative trance, wisdom, energy, as well as the absence of greed, ill-will, and delusion.[354] These wholesome states of mind, moreover, are connected with *karma* said to yield beneficial fruits. In this way, then, generalized emotional states may contribute on the one hand to avoiding a rebirth in one of the four miserable states (*apāya*)—namely as a hell-dweller,

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352 Bhikkhu Bodhi, gen. ed., *A Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma: The Abhidhammattha Sangaha of Ācariya Anuruddha* (Kandy, Sri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society, 1993), pp. 47-48.

353 Bodhi, gen. ed., *A Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma*, pp. 31-34.

354 Hammalava Saddhātissa, trans., "Nāmarūpasamāso and The Summary of Mind and Matter," *Journal of the Pali Text Society* 11 (1987), pp. 15-16.

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hungry ghost (*peta*), animal, or demon (*asura*), and on the other hand help one advance along the Buddhist path toward Nirvana.[355]

Such a technical understanding of the benefits of wholesome states of mind has typically been expressed on the level of performing acts of merit (*puññakamma*), which are commonly said to require these mental states to function efficaciously as the proper motivations for moral conduct. In short, aside from the wholesome mental states obtained by Buddhas and *arahants* that do not produce merit because they are devoid of all attachment to its fruits, the notion of *kusala* as wholesome mental states and the actions undertaken with them in mind (that is to say, thoughts and acts lacking any trace of desire, ill-will, or delusion) is commonly understood to be almost synonymous with *puñña*. In this regard, W. S. Karunatillake has noted a general desire among ordinary Sinhala Buddhists to perform wholesome acts and accumulate the resultant beneficial fruits to earn a better rebirth.[356] According to him, an act qualifies as a "*puññakamma*" if it is accompanied by a wholesome quality of mind before, during, and after the particular act is performed, so that one gradually purifies one's mind with morally beneficial thoughts.[357] In other words, a religious act that carries a positive result due to the law of cause and effect, or "karma," should be preceded by the conscious recognition that what one is about to do is morally righteous and yields beneficial results.

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355 For a traditional summary of the four miserable states, see *Vism* XIII. 92-93.

356 Karunatillake, "The Religiousness of Buddhists in Sri Lanka through Belief and Practice," pp. 18-19.

357 Karunatillake, "The Religiousness of Buddhists in Sri Lanka through Belief and Practice," pp. 20-21.

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Therefore, in the light of the above examples where emotional states of mind are held to have significant effects on the moral quality of one's acts and one's future destinies, the emphasis on emotion in the *Thūpavaṃsa*s is anything but gratuitous. Emotions represent an important aesthetic concern for Vācissara Thera and Parākrama Paṇḍita, as they both maintain that feelings such as serene joy and pious confidence are desired results of their texts. Yet the process by which emotions are constructed and generated in Buddhist histories also entails a complex understanding of how feelings depicted in the narratives can, in turn, be stimulated in a reader or listener. Direct exhortations to feel *pasāda*, *saṃvega*, and *saddhā* indicate an authorial concern, but do not fully comprise the means by which emotions are generated in the *Thūpavaṃsa*s. Rather, we will see that the narratives of the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s generate ethically productive emotions that serve to condition the way an individual understands one's self and the world. Specifically, feelings of joy and gratitude, engendered in historical narratives, contribute to a way of being in the world that is held to be consistent with Buddhist aims of increasing the well-being of oneself and others.

IV.2 JOY AND GRATITUDE IN THE *THŪPAVAṂSA*S

Among the various emotions depicted in the characters of the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s, the feelings of serene joy and gratitude are consistently portrayed as emotions that contribute to one's ethical development. Both Vācissara Thera and Parākrama Paṇḍita emphasize those particular emotional states in the descriptions of characters in their narratives. Whether witnessing

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astonishing miracles displayed by relics, giving alms to monks, or recalling the deeds of those in the past, the main actors in the *Thūpavaṃsa*s are typically defined by the joy and gratitude that they feel. We have already noted how *pāsada* is seen to function as an ethically productive emotion in the Theravāda tradition. In addition, gratitude is yet another virtue that is traditionally praised for its effects and valued as a factor contributing to positive relations with others. The *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, for example, celebrates gratitude as a desirable virtue that is connected with recalling how one has benefited from the past: "Therefore, virtuous persons, while being grateful and mindful, support their parents, remembering what was done previously."[358] The importance of gratitude is again extolled by the Buddha in the *Saṃyutta Nikāya* where he admonishes his monks: "We will be grateful and mindful. That which was done for us, however insignificant, will not be lost [upon us]. Monks, you ought to train yourselves in that way."[359] Again, gratitude is also listed among the most auspicious characteristics leading to one's well-being in the Mahāmaṅgala Sutta from the *Sutta Nipāta*.[360]

Along with serene joy, feeling grateful has been traditionally acknowledged as a beneficial state that ought to be cultivated by monastics and laypersons alike. Accordingly, the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s highlight joy and gratitude as qualities that have had a determinative influence on virtuous

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358 *A* III 43: *Tasmā santo sappurisā kataññū katavedino*
bharanti mātāpitaro pubbe katam anussaraṃ.
Elsewhere, in the same text, a grateful and mindful person (*kataññū katavedī puggalo*) is mentioned as one of five gems whose appearance is rare in the world. See *A* III 168-169.

359 *S* II 272. *Kataññuno bhavissāma katavedino,*
amhesu appakam pi kataṃ mā nassisatīti.
Evañhi vo bhikkhave sikkitabbanti.

360 *Sn* 47, v. 265.

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acts done in the past. Such emotional states are consistently depicted as prefiguring pious acts such as venerating and making offerings to the Triple Gem. The joy and gratitude felt by characters who realize that their well-being has been taken care of by others in the past is directly linked to their subsequent practice of meritorious acts. Moral agency, in other words, is realized in part through emotions that are said to arise from remembering what the Buddha and other virtuous agents did previously. The issue then becomes how the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s presume to make their readers and listeners feel joy and gratitude like the characters in their narratives. Part of the answer comes, I would argue, through aesthetic uses of language that are implicitly assumed to generate positive emotional states in an audience. In short, the *Thūpavaṃsa*s display the assumption that their narratives can recreate for readers and listeners the same emotional experiences that are exhibited by the characters in the story.

The most conspicuous evidence of the expectation that morally wholesome and productive emotions will be generated by persons who encounter the *Thūpavaṃsa*s is seen in several direct exhortations to the audience. At these points the narrator steps out of the prescribed role as the disembodied voice that transmits the story to the narratee in order to address the audience briefly and directly. The subject of the narrative discourse then shifts, without notice, from the events and characters of the story to the audience itself, implying that reflection upon the story and the emotions depicted therein actually engenders self-reflection and the arousal of similar emotions in the audience. The description of the expensive offerings given to the Triple Gem by King Duṭṭhagāmaṇī highlights the expectation that the emotions of a

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character in a story will be transferred over and shared by the readers and listeners of the text:

> Beginning from the construction of the *thūpa* and ending with the festival for dedicating the monastery, leaving aside the priceless objects, the remaining objects given away to venerate the Triple Gem by that grateful king, courageous in battle and generous in giving, with a mind serenely joyful and pure toward the Triple Gem and desiring the illumination of the Dispensation, were worth nineteen crores.
>
> Thus let the wise one, having overcome attachment to the body and wealth, which are transitory and without substance, doing merit for the sake of producing happiness, strive continually to achieve what has substance [that is, Nirvana].[361]

The text, in other words, implies that a reader or listener, having encountered the story of how King Duṭṭhagāmaṇī devoted much time and expense to building and dedicating the Maricavaṭṭi Monastery, will similarly be moved to venerate the Triple Gem with gratitude (*kataññunā*) and to delight oneself by engaging in morally productive acts of merit. To reflect upon the story of the king who makes lavish offerings that are described at length in the text is thus imagined to effect a considerable measure of wisdom and detachment from material objects among those in the audience. Furthermore, the "wise one" mentioned in the

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361 *Thūp* 216: *Yuddhe dāne ca sūrena sūrinā ratanattaye*
pasannāmalacittena sāsan' ujjotanatthinā

Raññā kataññunā tena thūpakārāpanādito
vihāramahan' antāni pūjetuṃ ratanattayaṃ,

Pariccattadhanan' ettha anagghāni vimuñciya
sesāni honti ekāya ūnā vīsatikoṭiyo.

Evaṃ sapañño bhidure asāre
dehe dhane saṅgam atikkamitvā
katvāna puññaṃ sukhasādhanatthaṃ
sāraṃ gahetuṃ satataṃ yateyyā 'ti.

Cf. *SThūp* 143, for a Sinhala paraphrase of the above quote. Therein, the king likewise is said to have "a pure mind that is serenely joyful in the Triple Gem" (*ratnatrayehi prasanna vū nirmala vū sit ātī*) and to be one "who knows the virtue of gratitude" (*keḷehi guṇa dannā vū*).

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text refers to a reader or listener in whom feelings of serene joy and gratitude have similarly moved him or her to disavow selfish attachment and to engage in moral, meritorious acts. If, as mentioned above, joy and gratitude condition the moral acts of the king, then the *Thūpavaṃsa*s reveal the persistent attempt to arouse similar emotions in those who read or listen to their narratives.

The view that emotions of serene joy and gratitude contribute to moral life is repeatedly alluded to throughout both *Thūpavaṃsa*s. An exhortation in the Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa* also depicts one's emotion as the critical factor behind the performance of acts of merit (Sinh: *piṅkama*). After the narrator summarizes a short account of the offerings made by a female deity to the Mahāthūpa in Anurādhapura, the focus is turned upon the audience. This particular episode concerns the realization of a certain female deity that her offerings to the Mahāthūpa (Sinh: Ruvanmäli Dāgaba) in her previous life has led to her rebirth in heaven where she enjoys the great prosperity that comes with living in the realm of the gods. Her conversation with a Buddhist monk who observes her veneration sets the stage for the narrator to suddenly switch the subject of the discourse to focus on the emotion to be experienced by the audience:

> At that time a Thera named Mahāsīvalī who was residing at Bāḷavaka, while going for the sake of venerating the Ruvanmäli Dāgaba that was built by the king, seeing that female deity who was venerating, and while standing at the foot of a large *attana* tree, asking that female deity at the time when, having venerated according to her wish, she was leaving, spoke thus to the female deity. How? That is to say, 'This entire Laṅkādvīpa has become fully illuminated by the radiance of your body, as if one thousand suns and one thousand moons had risen [at once]. What act of merit has been done by you in your past birth to obtain the fortune of such beauty?,' he asked. 'Reverend! It is not merit done with an object belonging to me. Having aroused serene joy in my mind, and having done work for wages at this *dāgaba*, this is the

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> prosperity obtained by that,' she declared. Thus there is great benefit and great reward even in merit done for wages with a mind that is serenely joyful toward the Dispensation of the Buddha. Therefore when such prosperity is obtained by merely having aroused serene joy in one's mind toward the Fully Awakened Buddha, who is my Svāmidaruvō, let offerings always be dilligently made to this Ruvanmāli Dāgaba by virtuous persons [*satpuruṣayan*] who are knowledgeable.[362]

The message of that passage is clear. The act of giving rise to serene joy in conjunction with acts of piety suffices to yield desireable Buddhist felicities. It is apparent that the narrator foresees a reader or listener who is able to imagine him or herself in the place of particular characters in the story, arouse serene joy in mind, and set out to perform meritorious acts. The text thus instructs us that one's emotional state is important since it conditions the quality of one's present acts and, in turn, can determine the subsequent fruits of such action.

One might suppose that the above passage represents a straightforward moral injunction for the reader or listener to do merit by making offerings to the Mahāthūpa in Anurādhapura. Implicit in this discourse, however, is the assumption that *pasāda* is an emotion produced in reaction and relation to something outside oneself—namely, the Triple Gem and the great benefits it holds in store for devotees. One does not arouse serene joy and make offerings simply by modelling oneself after someone else who has done so. Rather, the

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362 *SThūp* 162: *E vēlehi bāḷavaka vāḍa vasana mahāsīvalī naṁ ek tera kenekun vahansē rajjuruvan bandavana ruvanmāli dāgaba vaṅdinā piṇisa giya sēk, vaṅdinā ē divya strīya dāka maharuk attana gasamula vāḍa siṭi sēk, ē divya strīya abhiprāya vū paridden vāṅda nikmuṇu vēlehi vicārana sēk, divya strīyayaṭa mesē vadāḷa sēka. Kesē da? Yat, 'topagē śarīrālōkayen mē siyalu laṅkādvīpaya hirudahas saṅdadahas nāṅgā sē ekālōka vīya. Mesē vū rūpa sampat labannaṭa giya jātiyehi kavara kavara pinkamak kaḷā dā' yi vicāḷa sēka. 'Svāmīni! Apasantaka deyin kaḷa kusalayek nāta. Mē dāgaba apa sita pahadavā gena bāḷamehe koṭa eyin lada sampatā' yi dānvūya. Mesē budusasnehi pahan sitin milayaṭa kaḷa kusal pavā mahāphala mahānisaṃsa veyi. Esē heyin māgē svāmidaru vū samyak sambudurajāṇan kerehi sita pāhāda vū pamaṇakin me baṅdu sampat labana kala, nuvaṇāti satpuruṣayan visin hāma vēlehi no pamāva mē ruvanmāli dāgap pūjāva kaḷa mānavi.*

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text suggests that *pasāda* is an emotion that is contagiously felt. The description of the serene joy felt by the female deity signifies what the model reader or listener is expected to feel following any and every encounter with the Triple Gem. The reader or listener is obviously not being urged to become a deity and then worship at the shrine. The story of a woman reborn as a deity resulting from her serene joy and piety is instead presumed to elicit serene joy in the audience of the text. Emotions expressed by characters in the text are, in this way, believed to be reproduced in those who read or listen to such an account. Serene joy is conceived of here as being produced by the narrative itself, as it elicits rejoicing in the merit and good fortune of another while, at the same time, encourages the performance of merit by the audience with the understanding that an equivalent felicity awaits them as well.

The conceptualization of *pasāda* as a response to encounters with the Triple Gem is clearly shown in several accounts of miracles in the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s. Both texts frequently mention serene joy and other words that connote various degrees of happiness whenever characters in the story witness a miracle attributable to the power of the Buddha or an *arahant*. Such miracles are never occasions for doubt among those who possess pious confidence and who are not deluded by false views.[363] Rather, the descriptions of miracles in Buddhist histories typically reveal the expectation that people will

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363 See, for example, *Dāṭh* 126, vv. 16-20, where a *niganṭha* heretic tries to convince King Paṇḍu that the Tooth Relic which sunk into an anvil and illumined every direction before being struck and presumably destroyed by a hammer is actually an incarnation of the god Viṣṇu. This text's portrayal of the stubborn refusal of the *niganṭhas* to give up their false views gives occasion for the Tooth Relic to undergo several trials of its authenticity, and to thus testify to its power by performing numerous miracles that arouse serene joy in the public and eventually the king.

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experience serene joy in mind and reinforce their pious confidence in the power of the Triple Gem to effect their welfare. Like those who witness the miracles of the Buddha and highly attained *arahants* in the text, the audience who encounters these narrative descriptions is likewise expected to react with astonishment and serene joy toward such marvelous displays of power. Their emotional transformations are thus described, not so much to persuade an audience didactively as to evoke a similar response within them.

The vivid descriptions of miracles in the *Thūpavaṃsas* may thus be seen as attempts to recreate ethically productive emotions in those who become witness to such displays while reading or listening to the narrative. As a case in point, the Pāli *Thūpvaṃsa* describes how the emotion of serene joy is experienced by observers of a miracle at the time that the relics are established in the the relic chamber of the Mahāthūpa:

> The king, having lowered the relic casket from his head, thought, 'I will place it upon this very costly couch.' At that moment the relic casket, having gone from the king's head up to a spot measuring seven palm-trees [in the air], opened itself up. The relics, having gone up into the air, taking the form of the Buddha, adorned with the thirty-two marks of a Great Person, the eighty secondary characteristics, and the fathom-length halo, embellished by a garland of rays, and resplendent with a network of colored rays in types such as blue, yellow, and red, performed the Twin Miracle resembling the Twin Miracle at the foot of the Gaṇḍamba tree. There were twelve crores of gods and humans who, having seen that miracle of the relics and arousing serene joy, attained Arahantship. Those who attained the three other fruits were beyond reckoning.[364]

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364 *Thūp* 245-246: *Rājā sīsato dhātukaraṇḍakaṃ otāretvā mahārahe sayanapiṭṭhe ṭhapessāmīti cintesi. Tasmiṃ khaṇe dhātukaraṇḍako raññho sīsato sattatālapamāṇe ṭhāne gantvā sayam eva vivari. Dhātuyo ākāsam uggantvā dvattiṃsamahāpurisalakkhaṇa-asītīanuvyañjanabyāmappabhāpatimaṇḍitaṃ ketumālopasobhitaṃ nīlapītalohitādibhedavicitraraṃsijālasamujjalaṃ buddhavesaṃ gahetvā gaṇḍambamūle yamakapāṭihāriyasadisayamakapāṭihāriyam akaṃsu. Taṃ dhātupāṭihāriyaṃ disvā pasīditvā arahattaṃ pattā devamanussā dvādasakoṭiyo ahesuṃ. Sesaphalattayaṃ pattā gaṇanapatham atītā ahesuṃ.*

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The miracle in which a relic of the Buddha rises into the air and transforms itself into a resplendent image of the living Buddha is, in this way, directly related to attaining the paths and fruits (P: *maggaphala*) of those who have reached Nirvana or are very close to doing so.[365] The serene joy feit by those who gaze upon the relic is efficacious in as much as it reinforces the devotees' pious confidence that the Buddha attained tremendous powers that continue to subsist, more or less, in his relics. Furthermore, the *Thūpavaṃsa* implies that certain emotions generated in the encounter with and recollection of the Buddha's powers help Buddhists who have come into the world after the Buddha's lifetime to benefit from what he has done previously. To celebrate and feel joy for what the Buddha has achieved entitles a person to share in the potentially infinite fruits of his compassionate and meritorious deeds.

The response of serene joy in an audience is suggested by the elaborate and repeated accounts of miracles found throughout the *Thūpavaṃsa*s. The reader or listener, in turn, witnesses and is expected to respond similarly to the power of the Buddha, his relics, and of *arahant*s as represented in the narrative. The *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* illustrates a particularly stunning example wherein a text vividly depicts a miracle that arouses an emotional response within characters in the narrative apparently for the sake of recreating an analogous response within the text's audience. The richly detailed account wherein a *nāga* king projects an image of the then-deceased Buddha speaks to how aesthetic

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365 See *Vism* XII. 2-31, for a detailed discussion of the four paths and fruits associated with the Stream-enterer (*sotāpanna*), the Once-returner (*sakadāgāmī*), the Non-returner (*anāgāmī*), and the *arahant*.

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uses of language are envisioned to produce corresponding effects in the readers and listeners who "witness" miraculous displays through the narrative itself:

> That *nāga* king displayed a mass of six-colored Buddha rays that emanated, shining from the resplendent body of the Buddha who shines with the Thirty-Two Marks of a Great Person and with the Eighty Secondary Characteristics which arose from the power of his merit, and which spread across the body of the Buddha which was created by him for King Dharmāśoka who spoke like that. How was that? That is to say, a beam of blue-colored rays, having shot upwards 164,000 leagues to the top of the World Realm Mountain, emanated in all directions as if covering the entire world with clusters of *kasa* flowers, as if decorating it with *diyaberaliya* flowers, as if decorating it with the plumage of peacocks, and as if spreading out blue sapphire gems. An expanse of golden rays which emanated as if sprinkling the petals of the *kiṇihiri* flower over the whole world, as if covering it well with fully-blossomed Campaka petals, and as if covering the entire world with gold sprouts that rise from the foot of the Great Rose-Apple Tree that is enjoyed by the gods, while painting the great earth like a lump of gold, making the great ocean gold as if it were liquid golden which had melted, and having struck the World Realm Mountain, spilling over and falling down from the tops of one-hundred thousand lacs of mountains, emanated into the next world-realm. A great beam of red rays, which was like a bunch of *bañduvada* flowers, which was like the evening cloud, which put to shame red orpiment paste, which disgraced the color of the ruby gem, having risen up, covering the entire sky, remained like a red canopy which was set up for an offering to the Buddha. A beam of white Buddha-rays, while emanating like the evening star, like one-hundred thousand streams of silver rays, like one-hundred thousand autumn clouds, twisting and producing a whirlpool of light, while making the Lokāntarika Hell, which is dark throughout all the days of an eon, a single light like a tree of lamps on which lights numbering a *lac* were lit, began to emanate. A beam of scarlet-colored rays, making the Great Meru red like a *ratiňdugovva* worm, instantly making the Seven Mountain Ranges red like a bracelet of *madaṭa* seeds which has been offered to the Buddha, spreading the virtues of the Buddha, overwhelming the ten directions, while filling the height of the entire world, began to diffuse. A beam of the radiant mix of colors which was like a mixture obtained combining as many colors of the things which exist in the entire world, measuring [the size of] the trunk of a palmyrah tree, measuring [the size of] gabled houses, while covering the entire city like a ball of the seven precious materials that was raised and blown through a bamboo horn, began to diffuse. Thus, while that *nāga* king was displaying the beams of the wondrous mass of six-colored Buddha-rays of my Svāmidaruvō, that King Dharmāśoka and all the inhabitants of the city exclaimed the refrain of "Sādhu." They also began to snap their fingers and twirl cloths above their heads. Likewise

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> all beings such as *śakras*, *brahmās* and gods, *nāgas* and *suparṇas*, *yakṣas* and *rakṣasas*, clapping their hands, made offerings with the tumult of the endless refrain of "Sādhu."[366]

That lengthy description portrays feelings and acts of rejoicing as the effects of an aesthetic experience. King Aśoka and his retinue are overcome by the wondrous display of the form of the Buddha and cry out with the word "Sādhu" in joyous approval of what they have seen. Just as the colorful image of the Buddha and his six-colored rays provokes celebration among the characters in the story, it also might well be expected to produce a similar effect within readers and listeners who delight in imagining such a wondrous vision. A focus on the fantastic or "fictional" quality of the above passage misses the point. What this quote does is to draw attention to how aesthetic experiences can give rise to emotions that, in turn, are productive of devotional practice—

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366 *SThūp* 88-89: *Esē kī dharmāśoka rajahaṭa ē nāraja taman visin mavana lada buddha śarīrayehi visuruṇā vū kuśala balayen upannā vū asū anūbyañjanayen hā detis mahāpuruṣa lakṣaṇayen hebiyā vū budungē ranvan śarīrayen śobhamānava divana savaṇak ghaṇa budurās dākviya. Ē kesē vī da? yat: muḷulova kasamal kāṇin vasannā sē diyaberaliya malin navahaṁ karannā sē, monara piḷin sadannaā sē, indranīla māṇikyayan aturannā sē, nilvan ras kaṁdek ek lakṣa sūsāṭa dahasak yodun sakvaḷagala hisa pānagena itira divannaṭa vana. Muḷulova kiṇihiri mal peti isnā sē monavaṭa pipi sapupetten vasannā sē, deviyan anubhava karana mahadaṁba gasamula nāṁgi ran daḷuyen muḷulova vasannā sē, divagat ranvan ras patarek mahapoḷova ran piḍāllak sē raṁdamin maha sāgaraya viruvāpu ran rasayak sē ranvan keremin, sakvaḷa gala gāsī hisa pānagena sālī siyadahas suvahasgal mudunen helā parasakvaḷa divanṭa vana. Baṁduvada kusum kāla baṁduvū, sandhyāvalā baṁdu vū, sindura kalkayaṭa apahāsa karannā vū padmarāga māṇikya pāhāyaṭa nindā karannā vū ratmaha ras kaṁdek nāṁgi budu pudayaṭa bāṁda lū rat viyanak sē, muḷu ahasa vasā siṭa gata. Dava hat taru sē, ridī rās daharāvō siya dahas sē, sarat valā siya dahas sē, sudubuduras kaṁda divamin āṁbaremin, saḷā vāṭuṁ demin, kapak davas muḷullehi aṁduru vū lokāntarika niraya lakṣa gaṇan pahan āvuḷu vū pahan rākak sē ēkālōka keremin divanṭa paṭan gata. Maṁdaṭavan raskaṁdek mahamera ratiṁdugovvaku sē ratkeremin, saptakūla parvatayan budunṭa pudā lū madaṭa vaḷallak sē, eka pāhāra rat keremin buduguṇa paturā gena dasadik māḍagena muḷu lōkusa puramin pātirennaṭa vana. Siyalu lova ātitāk vastūngē noyek pāhā tāk ek koṭa anā aḷalāpuvak vāni vū pabasara raskaṁdek talkaṁda pamaṇava kuṭāgāra pramaṇava, uṇakuḷalin piṁba naṁgāpū satruvan kāṭi sē siyalu nuvara vasamin pātirennaṭa vana. Mesē māgē svāmidaruvangē āścaryyamat savaṇak ghana buduras kaṁda ē nāraja dakvat dakvat ē dharmāśoka raja da siyalu nuvara vāsīhu da sādhukāra śabda pāvāt vūha. Asurusan denṭa da piḷi hisa sisāranṭa da paṭan gatha. Mesē atpoḷasan haṁḍa dī ananta vū sādhukāra kōlāhalayen śakra, brahma dēvatāvōya, nāga suparṇayōya, yakṣa rākṣasayōya, yana siyallō ma pūjā pāvātvūha.*

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namely, joyously honoring an image of the Buddha by saying "Sādhu," making noise, and twirling cloths in celebration.

While the *Thūpavaṃsa*s function to provide what Trainor calls the "relic's pedigree," or the historical account of how it originated and arrived in Sri Lanka, they also provide the means for giving rise to emotions that are valued for their ability to transform people.[367] Put differently, the chronicles assume the role of revivifying the transformative power of the now-deceased Buddha that is objectively located in his relics. The truism in Theravāda Buddhism that the Buddha is held to have passed away in a final state of Nirvana and, as a result, no longer acts in the world, has proven to be an enduring feature of the tradition throughout Sri Lanka's history up to the present.[368] It has been shown, however, that his corporeal relics continue to represent his presence in the world, and serve in part as as a focal point for veneration in Buddhist communities.[369] Yet aside from recounting the history of these relics, the narratives of the medieval *vaṃsa*s act directly upon the emotions and imagination of a prospective audience, conditioning productive feelings of joy and reverence toward the Triple Gem. Textual accounts of the miraculous displays of relics therefore appear designed to astonish and delight readers and listeners, evoking serene joy and pious confidence that the Buddha's influence remains an active force in the world.

Thus, the *Thūpavaṃsa*s are noteworthy for their repeated insistence and testimony to the fact that the Buddha's relics remain potent sources of his power

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367 Trainor, *Relics, Ritual, and Representation in Buddhism*, p. 78.

368 Obeyesekere and Gombrich, *Buddhism Transformed*, p. 455.

369 See Trainor, *Relics, Ritual, and Representation in Buddhism*, esp., pp. 187-188.

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long after he passed out of *saṃsāra*. The accounts of miracles performed by the relics are due, according to the textual tradition, to resolutions (P: *adhiṭṭhāna*; Sinh. *adhiṣṭhāna*) made by the Buddha while he was still alive in the world. This is the explanation for the story of how the Buddha's right collar-bone relic rose up in the air by its own power and performed the Twin Miracle, emitting six-colored rays, as well as streams of water and fire. Following the account given in *Mahāvaṃsa* XVII. 43-53, the Pāli *Thūpavaṃsa* maintains that the source of this miracle can be traced to one of the five resolutions made by the Buddha while he laid on the bed at his *parinirvāṇa*:

> Indeed it was not by the power of the Theras nor by the power of the deities, but by the power of the Buddha alone. It is said that the Meritorious One, while still living, resolved, 'On the day that my right collar-bone relic is established at the location of the shrines for the three previous Buddhas in the southern quarter of Anurādhapura in the island of Tambapaṇṇi, may the Twin Miracle occur.'[370]

The above explanation given for the miracle of the collar-bone relic reinforces the idea that the Buddha made arrangements for future devotees to witness events that would arouse ethically productive emotions in them. Indeed, on this occasion, the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* has the Buddha resolve that, "while

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370 *Thūp* 200: *Taṅ ca kho n'eva therānubhāvena, na devatānubhāvena, api ca kho buddhānaṃ yeva ānubhāvena. Bhagavā kira dharamāno 'va adhiṭṭhāsi, tambapaṇṇidīpe anurādhapurassa dakkhiṇadisābhāge purimakānaṃ tiṇṇaṃ buddhānaṃ cetiyaṭṭhāne mama dakkhiṇakkhakadhātu patiṭṭhānadivase yamakapāṭihāriyaṃ hotū 'ti*. Cf. *SThūp* 105. There are five resolutions in all attributed to the living Buddha concerning the Mahabodhi, the right collar-bone relic, and the *droṇa* of relics to be established in the Ruvanmāli Dāgaba. See, for instance, *SBōdhv* 220. Although the resolutions of the Buddha concerning the posthumous display of miracles were limited to five, the tradition has made room for the possibility of additional miracles by his relics, such as those performed by the Tooth Relic. Prof. P. B. Meegaskumbura has suggested in a personal communication (3/12/96) that various accounts of miracles found in Pāli and Sinhala literature highlight the efficacy of pious confidence and truthfulness, while simultaneously holding out hope that such miracles might be repeated if those same virtues are replicated in full.

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displaying the Twin Miracle, let [the relic] make the gods and persons happy."[371] The narrative, in this way, demonstrates how past events occurred with the purpose for making beings feel joy. Emotional states were predicted and prepared for with the express intent of contributing to the joy and gratitude of people in the future. The *Thūpavaṃsa*s can likewise aspire to produce such effects by relating miracles that arouse one's imagination and affirm that past events have direct consequences for those in the present.

While the experience of reading or hearing about a miracle is surely different from being present at its performance, Buddhist histories seem to imply that the beneficial emotional states that derive from such occasions may be recreated through their narrative accounts. The *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* suggests as much when it relates the response of the Bodhisattva Sumedha to the news that the Buddha Dīpaṅkara would be arriving soon in that very place. The narrator attempts to recreate a sense of Sumedha's happiness to hear about a Buddha by employing a simile to effect the imaginative empathy of the audience:

> The Noble One who heard those words, thinking 'Hearing the sweet speech and receiving the sight of a Buddha, the Teacher of the Three Worlds, who has not appeared in the world even after one hundred-thousand crores of eons, is difficult to obtain,' and having a mind filled with the sentiment of joy like a horn filled with jaggery, saying 'Now if you are clearing the road for the arrival of the Buddha, give me a place to wholly prepare,' descended to the ground [from the air] like a ball of jewels that has fallen to the earth, having been dropped from the hands of a female deity.[372]

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371 *SThūp* 105: *Yamakaprātihāryya dakvamin devminisun satuṭu kerēvā yi adhiṣṭhāna koṭa.*

372 *SThūp* 3: *E bas āsū uttamayō 'kapkeḷa suvahasakinut lokayehi pahaḷa vīmak nāttā vū tilōguru budukenekungē dākmak hā miyuru baṇa āsīmak hā lābīma durlabhaya' yi śarkarā piruṇu vak kamak sē prīti rasayen piruṇu citta santāna ātiva, 'idiṅ tepi budun vaḍanā maṅga heḷi karav naṁ maṭat sarahā laṇṭa ektānak deva' yi kiyamin dev duvaka atin gilihī bima huṇu ratnakandukayak men bimaṭa bāsa.*

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The simile, "like a horn filled with jaggery," is employed to vividly evoke the "sentiment of joy" (*prīti rasayen*) felt by Sumedha. Jaggery (Sinh: *śarkarā*) is a very sweet type of sugar made from palm-sap, found even today in Sri Lanka.[373] When used in the above passage as a simile, its purpose is to convey to the audience something of the pleasure felt by Sumedha upon hearing about the impending arrival of a Buddha. Yet, in doing so, the simile of jaggery works to enhance the aesthetic sensibilities of its audience, leading them to imagine how Sumedha felt and, in turn, to feel pleasure themselves in encountering this narrative.

Moreover, the above quotation signals an implicit recognition of the transformative power of emotions and language. Sumedha's effort to clear a section of the road on which Dīpaṅkara Buddha is travelling comes about as a result of feeling rather than thought in the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa*. Put simply, Sumedha hears words, feels joy, and instinctively wants to act in a manner that is ethically wholesome and productive.[374] The *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* thus suggests that emotions of joy can contribute to individual moral agency.

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373 Jaggery is mentioned twice elsewhere in the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* as one of the items left out by King Duṭugāmuṇu for the persons laboring on the Brazen Palace and the Great Dāgaba. See, for example, *SThūp* 145, 158. Cf. "*sakkhara*" in *Thūp* 223.

374 This account places more emphasis on emotion as a factor conditioning meritorious acts than the same episode in the Pāli *Thūpavaṃsa*. The latter account depicts Sumedha's decision to clear the road as a more reflective act:

> Hearing that, the wise Sumedha thought, 'Indeed even the utterance "Buddha" is difficult to obtain, let alone the appearance of a Buddha. On account of that it behooves me also to clear the path of arrival for the Ten-powered One with these people.' He spoke to those people, 'Friends, if you are clearing this road for the Buddha, give a spot to me also. I too will clear the road with you' (*Thūp* 149).

It appears that once again the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* has elaborated the account in the Pāli version, which is taken almost verbatim from *Madhuratthavilāsinī*. See, for example, *Bv-a* 86 and *Bv-a*$_2$ 71. The emotional impetus for Sumedha to do merit is evidently another instance of commentarial gloss supplied by the later Sinhala text.

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Sumedha's resolve to engage in physical labor to prepare the road on which the Buddha will be travelling comes as a result of an emotional state that seizes his mind and leads him to act in a way that prepares him for his career as a *bodhisattva*. Whereas the sentiment of joy overtakes Sumedha's mind when he hears the word "Buddha," the readers and listeners of the the narrative would be expected to feel similar emotions of joy upon hearing the account of how their Buddha first resolved to attain Enlightenment for their sake.

The ability of historical narratives to convey emotional experiences is further supported by some views on the power of language in medieval Sri Lanka. It appears that some of the power attributable to similes, hyperbole, and other figures of speech routinely employed in medieval Buddhist chronicles can be traced to an understanding of the aesthetics of language derived from Sanskrit poetics. If we recall that the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* depicts Sumedha as feeling *prītirasa*, or the "sentiment of joy," upon hearing about the Buddha, we might reasonably suppose that the author recognized that certain generalized feelings (*rasas*) could arise out of aesthetic experiences generated by a text. The idea that language can create realities is well-attested to in the *Siyabaslakara*, a Sinhala translation of Daṇḍin's Sanskrit treatise on poetics called *Kāvyādarśa*:

> Here in this world, all speech, whether learned or unlearned, makes the world exist on account of its perspequity.
>
> If the lamp, namely language, does not shine emitting its rays, will it not be that the entire three worlds will be covered in a mass of darkness?

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> The image of the fame of kings remains visible even after their deaths when it is reflected in the mirror of language.[375]

From the perspective of those verses on poetics, language can bring things into being, foster understanding, and retain a potency that outlasts its real referent in the world. Thus, in a similar way, the narratives of the *Thūpavaṃsa*s were apparently conceived to evoke feelings of joy in a model reader or listener, long after the historical events narrated therein have occurred. It seems likely that the language used in the *vaṃsa*s to describe the miracles and marvellous attainments by former beings could have been understood to be able to generate emotional and imaginative experiences in contemporary audiences of the text. To speak about and describe emotions such as serene joy felt by figures in the past is thus the first step towards replicating and transmitting such experiences to a model reader or listener.

The *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa*, in particular, makes extensive use of descriptive similes and metaphors to convey the emotional experiences that are described in its narrative. These emotions are frequently associated with incidents in which characters encounter the Triple Gem and respond in kind. The text further tends to represent those who feel serene joy and gratitude in terms akin to its prospective audience of readers and listeners. One example of how the text envisions an emotional response in an audience is found in an

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375 Charles Hallisey, unpublished translation. Cf. *SiyB*, vv. 4-6:

> *Mehi viyat aviyat - siyal vadanut me pahan,*
> *guṇen pavati savāren - teme lōyā pavatmin.*
>
> *Metun lō siyal - idi sada vāṭup ras rās,*
> *nodiliyeta 'ñda bav dā - tama kañda nō? kaltāyen.*
>
> *Pera maharu maharaja - yasa piḷibiṁbu gos bas,*
> *kāṭatelehi siṭune penē - piḷi ovuna naṭakalhi du.*

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extended description of an audience's reaction to the words of the Bodhisattva (referred to here by the Sinhala honorific "*svāmidaruvō*") when he existed as the wise pandit Senaka:

> At that time my Svāmidaruvō, with a graceful form that was mind-captivating like the disk of the young sun that has risen up from the peak of the Udayagiri Mountain, preached a sermon pointing out this world and the next world, as if taking the stream of water in the heavenly river and bathing all beings. They say the voice of that Noble One was acquired from the power of good deeds that were fulfilled throughout four incalculable world-periods and one hundred-thousand eons. They say it was a sweet sermon, being delivered as if opening his mouth to expell the affection which was accumulated for endless and immeasurable beings because it cannot be held in his stomach. What a speech! What learnedness! What insight into this world and the next world! What a moving exposition of the Dharma! Was it not pleasing as if honey had been poured into the ear of whoever heard that sermon that he delivered? Whose eyes were not moistened with tears of joy? Whose eyes did not dance on their forehead [in wonder]? Whose hair on their whole body did not stand up on end from happiness? Whose mouth did not become talkative with the refrain of 'Sādhu'? Who did not think that 'I have reaped the fruit of the existence into which I was born'?[376]

The narrator in the above passage speaks from the perspective of the audience who responds to seeing and hearing the Bodhisattva speak. Several similes and metaphors vividly depict this experience in order to replicate it for an audience external to the text. The *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa*, in other words, anticipates that its vivid descriptions of the Buddha and his relics will similarly delight and astonish its readers and listeners. Sermons and discourses by the Buddha and

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376 *SThūp* 38: *E vēlehi māgē svāmidaruvāṇō udayagiri parvata mastakayen nāṅgi ḷahiru maṇḍalak men manahara vū rūpa vilāsayen ākāśa gaṅgāvē jaladhārāva āra siyalu satvayan nāvana kalak men melō paralō haṅgavā baṇa vadāraṇa sēka. Ē uttamayāṇan vahansēgē sārāsaṅkhya kalpa lakṣayak muḷullehi pirū sucaritānubhāvayen lat kaṭa haṅdek la. Anantāparimāṇa satvayaṇṭa rās kaḷa snēhaya baḍa no gannā heyin vamāraṇṭa kaṭa dalvannāk men vadāraṇa mihira baṇak la. Kesē vū bas da! Kesē vū viyatkamek da! Kesē vū melō paralō dakmek da! Kesē vū ḷaganā dharmayukti vādǎrumek da! Ē baṇa vadārāt āsū kavarek kana mī vatkaḷā sē no piṇavannē da? Kavarakhugē āsek satuṭu kaṅdulen no temiyē da? Kavarakhugē āsek naḷala nonāṭi da? Kavarakhugē siyoḷaṅga lom satuṭin keḷin no siṭiyē da? Kavarakhugē kaṭa sādhūkārayen doḍamalu nuvūyē da? Kavarek 'upan ātma bhāvayehi vipāka ladimi' yi no sitūyē da?*

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Bodhisattva conveyed within the narrative would be expected to similarly move an attentive and pious audience. It is in this sense that we should understand the aesthetic and evocative use of language in the *Thūpavaṃsa*s for the sake of generating emotions that are valued for their effect on devotees. Figures of speech such as "as if honey had been poured into the ear" are suggestive of the joy felt in hearing the Dharma spoken from the mouth of the Bodhisattva, and the model reader or listener is envisioned to give rise to such feelings of joy as a result of this narrative account. Therefore, like the Bodhisattva, the text is implicitly conceived as "bringing joy to the faces that are not joyous, and bringing further joy to the joyous faces."[377]

The Pāli *Thūpavaṃsa* also makes use of figurative speech to describe and evoke emotions. Although its method of compiling and presenting Pāli narratives from elsewhere tends to inhibit its use of elaborate similes and metaphors, the Pāli *Thūpavaṃsa* still draws attention to emotional experience as a productive element in Buddhist practice. We find one example of this in the scene where King Devānampiyatissa resolves to test the authenticity of the right-collar bone relic that he is enshrining in the Thūpārāma Dāgāba:

> Thereupon this occurred to him, 'If this is a relic of the Perfect Sambuddha, may the parasol lean to the side, may the royal elephant be supported on the earth by his knees, and may the relic casket be established upon my head.' Along with the arising of the king's thought, the parasol leaned to the side, the elephant was supported by his knees, and the relic casket was established on the king's head. The king, becoming endowed with the highest joy and delight like one

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377 *SThūp* 38: *[S]vāmidaruvāṇō no satuṭu muhuṇu satuṭu ovamin satuṭu muhuṇu diyuṇu diyuṇuva satuṭu ovamin.*

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whose body is imbued with ambrosia [*amata*], asked, 'Reverend! What shall I do with the relic?'[378]

Witnessing the miraculous confirmation of the relic's authenticity, the king's joyful response is conveyed by a simile that not only represents his happiness, but also offers an image with which to stimulate the audience's feelings and imagination. In this way, the text defines a relationship to be had with relics that is expressed chiefly in terms of emotion. The simile offers a frame to pattern the encounters that readers and listeners may themselves have with the Buddha's relics at various shrines. The happiness that one is expected to feel is pervasive. Moreover, the simile of ambrosia (*amata*) is an idealized concept derived from an image of the nectar of the gods, and can represent metonymically the immortal state of Nirvana. Yet the image of ambrosia used here is significant since it implies that the emotional states experienced when one witnesses a miracle by a relic are analogous to the blissful experience of Nirvana or the teaching that leads to it in Buddhist texts.[379]

The image is further strengthened by the use of the Pāli past participle *abhisitta* from the verb *abhisiñcati* ("to sprinkle over, to consecrate"), which is

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[378] *Thūp* 198: *Athassa etad ahosi, 'sace ayaṃ sammāsambuddhassa dhātu chattaṃ apanamatu, maṅgalahatthī jaṇṇukehi bhūmiyaṃ patiṭṭhahatu, dhātucaṅgoṭakaṃ mayhaṃ matthake patiṭṭhahatū 'ti. Saha rañño cittuppādena chattaṃ apanami, hatthī jaṇṇukehi patiṭṭhahi, dhātucaṅgoṭakaṃ rañño matthake patiṭṭhahi. Rājā amaten' evābhisittagatto paramena pītipāmojjena samannāgato hutvā pucchi, 'dhātuṃ bhante kiṃ karomī 'ti.*

[379] Elsewhere, the Buddha Dīpaṅkara is described as "having caused hundreds of crores of gods and humans to drink the nectar of the Dhamma," (*koṭisatānaṃ devamanussānaṃ dhammāmataṃ pāyetvā*) *Thūp* 148. Gotama Buddha is similarly said to have "caused eighteen crores, headed by the Thera Aññākoṇḍañña to drink the ambrosial nectar," (*aññākoṇḍaññattherapamukhe aṭṭhārasa koṭiyo amatapānaṃ pāyesi*) *Thūp* 167-168. And the metaphor appears a third time after the relics that are to be established in the Mahāthūpa perform several miracles, re-enter the relic casket, and establish themselves on the head of King Duṭṭhagāmaṇī, who in turn is described as "being annointed as if with ambrosia" (*amatena viya abhisitto*), *Thūp* 246. In his book entitled *Dhamma*, Carter notes that "*amata*" represents one of the most frequent metaphors for Dhamma in Theravāda literature (pp. 150-151).

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ordinarily used to describe the ritual of consecration for a king. In the traditional South Asian context of kingship rituals, the ablution of a king signifies the infusion of divine qualities which modifies and enhances one's capacity to act in an efficacious way.[380] The *Thūpavaṃsa* reiterates this same idea when, in narrating the story of King Asoka, it states, "by the power of (his royal) consecration, these psychic powers of the king came (to him)," and then goes on to relate the great number of tributes he received from the gods, *nāgas*, and various animals.[381] Thus, relating happiness to being consecrated or imbued with ambrosia connotes a transformative experience of joy that further suggests a change in one's existential condition. The delight felt in response to a miracle by the relic, which itself is related to arousing serene joy towards the virtues of the Triple Gem, is compared to the experience of Nirvana and/or hearing the Dhamma. Moreover, when such joy is said to be produced by witnessing a miraculous event, the *Thūpavaṃsa* confirms its potential to effect a similar experience in an audience by narrating that event and the subsequent response of the beings present.

Furthermore, in the context of the narrative such feelings are productive since when they are aroused in conjunction with recalling the virtues of the Triple Gem, it is assumed that they are conducive to progress along the path to Nirvana. If we take *amata* in the sense of the nectar leading to the deathless

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380 Inden, *Imagining India*, pp. 235-237. For an extended discussion on the consecration of kings in India, see Jan Gonda, *Ancient Indian Kingship from the Religious Point of View* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1966),pp. 79-93. Therein, Gonda presents a similar view whereby the *abhiṣeka* ceremony is represented in Sanskrit literature as bestowing powers of greatness, sanctity, splendor, prowess, and abundance upon the king who is thus consecrated.

381 *Thūp* 184-185. The quoted material reads: "*abhisekānubhāvena imā rājiddhiyo āgatā.*" Cf. *SThūp* 86, which reads: "that Great King Aśoka...came to the fore in terms of great psychic powers of a king along with arriving at that kingship."

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state of Nirvana, then the above literary flourish signifies that the happiness felt by the king at the sight of the miracle is at least roughly equivalent to hearing the Dhamma preached and, at the same time, holds out the promise of a similar result.[382] It both signifies a transformation of a character in the narrative and actively works to transform a reader or listener by supplying the means to imagine the happiness of another and to feel happiness oneself. In other words, the text is both a user's manual and the tool to be used, showing what is to be done while presuming at the same time to do just that. It is a "model" that effects its own imitation by shaping the encounters that readers and listeners have with the narrative.

As we noted in chapter two, the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* contains many examples of embellishment and figurative speech with which to arouse the emotions of an audience. On the one hand, this is consistent with the correct observation that the Sinhala *vaṃsa*s characteristically expand upon the descriptions laid out in their Pāli counterparts.[383] Yet I would also argue that such embellishment represent a strategy of composing passages with greater attention to the aesthetics of language in order to make a reader or listener respond more emotionally in a manner analogous to the characters depicted in the narratives. Parākrama Paṇḍita consistently and explicitly correlates feelings

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382 Although King Devanāmpiyatissa's specific fate is not spelled out in either *Thūpavaṃsa*, the *Pūjāvaliya* confirms the eventual attainment of felicity for this king: "Thus having made immeasurable offerings which included the offering of shrines, the offering of monastic residences, and the offering of the courtyard for the Bodhi Tree, that King Devanapātis, having ruled righteously for forty years, went to the world of the gods." See *Pjv* 770: *Mesē caitya pūjā ya, saṅghāvāsa pūjā ya, bodhyaṅgaṇa pūjā ya yi yanādī vū apramāṇa vū pūjā karavā ē devanapātis satalis havuruddak dāhāmen rājyaya koṭa devulova giyaha.*

383 Kulasuriya, *Sinhala Sāhityaya III*, p. 177.

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of joy with elaborate and beautiful narrative passages. Several episodes depict long lists of gods, humans, and other beings rejoicing and celebrating events such as the birth of the Buddha, the passing away into *parinirvāṇa*, and the enshrining of his relics in *dāgābas*. The scene where Sujātā presents the Bodhisattva with a bowl of milk-rice nicely depicts how the author employs elaborate imagery both to display happiness as well as to create it:

> At that time the maid-servant named Pūrṇā, having accepted the words spoken by Sujātā with the utmost respect, having gone to the foot of the Ajapāla banyan tree, seeing the Noble One who was seated towards the east, decorating the tree with golden rays like the disc of the young sun near a dark-blue raincloud, thinking "Today our deity has descended from the tree. He has sat down to accept the milk-rice by hand," and becoming afraid, she went away hurriedly and told the mistress. Having heard that speech, Sujātā, putting that maid-servant in a position second to herself [in the household], and having adorned herself with all these ornaments such as gold-bracelets, an ornamented girdle, anklers, ear-ornaments, a necklace of a single strand, toe-rings, foot bracelets, ankle rings, foot ornaments, ornaments for the toes, ornaments for the toe-nails, foot plates, nettings of small bells, rings for the hands, bangles, a gold waist-chain, jewelled hand bracelets, jewelled bangles, gold bangles, ornaments around her ears, *pamutuliňga*, necklaces, and cloth embroidered with gold, and having filled a solid gold bowl worth a lac with milk-rice for him, covering it with a similar gold dish, and having covered it with a white cloth, placing it on her head like the disc of the young sun that rises in the morning, and while causing lotuses, namely the faces of beings, to bloom with happiness, and being accompanied by sixteen-thousand women as if filling the world-realm with the sound of sixty-eight thousand drums which were beaten, having gone to the foot of the banyan tree, handing the bowl to one of the women, bowing her face to his feet as if overturning a lotus upon a lotus, and while she continued to venerate, seeing that the Noble One who looked at her remained seated without stretching forth his hand because the bowl which was given by Brahmā had disappeared, and opening the dish which covered it, saying "I give this dish for the partaking of food," and having offered it to his hands, speaking words of joy, "May your wish, Sir, be fulfilled just as my wish has been fulfilled."[384]

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384 *SThūp* 29-30: *E vēlehi pūrṇā nam dāsi da sujātāvan kī bas mudunen piḷigena ajapāla nugaruk mulaṭa gos nilvaḷākuḷak ḷaňga ḷahiru maňḍalak men ranvan rasin ruka sadā, nāgenahira balā vāḍahun uttamayā dāka 'ada apagē devatāvāṇō rukin bāsapūya. Atin kiripiňdu piḷiganṭa un vanā' yi biyapatva velevi veleviva gos, sāmi diyaṇiyanṭa kiva. Ē tepul asā sujātā ē dāssa tamāṭa devana tanhi tabā kaṇaka, kaṭakka rasanā, nūpura, tāḍaňka,*

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That vivid description of beauty replete with figurative speech demonstrates how the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* works to convey happiness in at least two senses of the word. First, it communicates an impression of the happiness felt by Sujātā and others at the sight of the Buddha-to-be and at the opportunity to give alms. Secondly, the scene also underscores the effort to transmit Sujātā's feelings of happiness and gratitude over to readers and listeners by depicting the scene with beautiful and evocative imagery. The aesthetic embellishment that is so strongly featured in the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* may be viewed as an authorial strategy to evoke generalized emotions in an audience.

In this vein it is possible to detect the considerable influence of Sanskrit poetics on the composition of medieval Buddhist histories such as the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa*. The Sinhala prose used in composing the chronicles in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries reflects a "sanskritized" and highly affected form of the language. Thus, Sinhala works in this period typically use Sanskrit forms of *alaṅkāra* ("ornamentation") to enhance the aesthetic quality of their narratives, particularly in eulogies devoted to the Buddha or other revered figures.[385] This quality that is found in varying degrees among the Sinhala

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ekvāṭi, pāmudu, pāsalaṁba, pāḍagaṁ, pādaṅgā, oravasaṁ, vījavastra, kakudapāda, pādāṅgulī, pādanakha, pādapatra, kiṅkiṇijālā hastamudrīkā, kayipōṭṭu, ransavaḍi, miṇikayi vaḷalu, miṇikayi vaḍaṁ, ruvan valaḷu, kādukāppu, pamutuliṅga, paṭṭakāra, ransaḷu, mē ādi sarvābharaṇayen sādī, lakṣayak vaṭanā ghanaran taliyaka kiribat purādī ebaṅdu rantaliyekin vasā, sudu piḷiyekin vasā, udaya nāṅgi ḷahiru maṅdalak men hisa tabā, satvayan muhuṇu namāti piyum satuṭu keremin gāsū aṭasāṭa dahasak berahaṅḍin sakvaḷa puranniyaka men soḷos dahasak strīn prirvarā nugaruk mulaṭa gos, taliya ekeki ataṭa dī piyumak ḷaṅga piyumak kibisini karannā sē śrī pādayaṭa muhuṇa yomu koṭa, vāṅda vāṅda siṭi kalhi, bālū uttamayā brahmayā dun pātraya antardhāna vū heyin ata no dik koṭa unnā dāka, vāsū taliya 'mē taliya budinaṭama demi' yi ataṭa piḷiganvā, 'māgē manadoḷa piruṇā sē ma numba vahansē gē manadoḷa pirēvā' yi satuṭu vadan kiyā kiyā.

385 Kulasuriya, *Sinhala Sāhityaya III*, p. 107. Note that the period between the 11th and 13th centuries has been called the heyday of Sanskrit learning in Sri Lanka, especially in terms of the extent to which Sanskrit was used as a literary medium and the quality of the

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chronicles, but generally more so than in their Pāli counterparts, is often expressed in highly ornate descriptions and the use of "serial" or "extended" similes (Skt: *malopama*).[386] An example of a serial simile intended to embellish the narrative of the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* is found in the passage that immediately follows Sujātā's gift of milk-rice to the Bodhisattva:

> [A]nd after they had gone, taking the bowl and putting it on a sand bed on the bank named 'Supratiṣṭhita' along the river named Nerañjarā, and when he bathed, having scrubbed with the hands—namely the waves, of the girl—namely the river, that had a line of hair—namely the flow of water running in reverse, an ornamented necklace—namely the drops of water running in a row, and hips—namely the banks, . . .[387]

This description of the river in which the Bodhisattva bathes illustrates the poetic use of a serial simile in which language is aesthetically enhanced to delight an audience. It should be clear, moreover, that the above passage does not exactly contribute towards reflection upon either ethical or doctrinal issues. Rather, it serves as a kind of literary flourish in a manner akin to the concept of an *alaṅkāra* in Sanskrit poetics, enhancing the aesthetic enjoyment of the narrative and making the the past seem more real and more beautiful.

The theories and works of Sanskrit poetics appears to have been introduced into Sri Lankan literary circles beginning, at the latest, in the tenth century of the common era. Around that time Daṇḍin's *Kāvyādarśa* was

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works produced during those years. See O. H. De A. Wijesekera, "Pali and Sanskrit in the Polonnaruva Period," in *The Polonnaruva Period*, ed. S. D. Saparamadu (1955; reprint, Dehiwala, Sri Lanka: Tisaro Prakasakayo, 1973), pp. 106-109.

386 For a brief discussion on this figure of speech, see Ananda Kulasuriya's review of Ranjini Obeyesekere's *Jewels of the Doctrine* in *The Sri Lanka Journal of the Humanities* XVII & XVIII, p. 345. See also Hallisey, "*Nibbānasutta*," pp. 106-109, for a discussion of what the serial simile of the "city of Nibbāna" communicates in that particular Pāli *sutta*.

387 *SThūp* 30: *Giya pasu taliya gena nerañjarā naṁ gaṅgāyehi supratiṣṭhita naṁ toṭa vālitalāyaka tabā peraḷī divana jaladhārā namāti vasārodāti, peḷehi divana jala bindu namāti ekāvāla paḷan āti, toṭa namāti ukuḷu āti, gaṅgā namāti aṅganāva, raḷa namāti atin ulā, nāvū kalhi.*

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translated and adapted into Sinhala as the *Siyabaslakara*. In the eleventh century, King Vijayabāhu I facilitated the growth of Sanskrit learning by encouraging pandits from other lands to come and settle in Sri Lanka and, as a consequence, Sanskrit forms of expression acheived considerable popularity in literary production.[388] The precise nature and extent of the influence of Sanskrit poetics on medieval Sinhala and Pāli literature still remains to be determined. What is clear, however, is that Sinhala poetry in the premodern period became particularly indebted to Sanskrit treatises on prosody and poetics, often simply substituting Buddhist Jātaka stories as the themes of their embellished works.[389] As an example of this, G. D. Wijayawardhana has shown that the author of the thirteenth-century *Kavsiḷumiṇa* clearly possessed a thorough grasp of *rasa* theory, suggesting that both *rasa*s and *bhava*s could be enjoyed by the learned connoiseur of poetry in Sri Lanka.[390]

Yet *rasa* theory, as developed beginning with early Sanskrit aestheticians such as Daṇḍin, and especially by later writers such as Ānandavardhana in his ninth-century *Dhvanyāloka*, came to revolve around the poet's ability to evoke latent aesthetic sentiments in the minds of cultured readers. These sentiments (*rasa*s) were conceived largely as generalized emotions, intuitively blissful, and ultimately distinguishable from the particularities of the natural feelings enjoyed by an individual in the course of

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388 Malalasekera, *The Pāli Literature of Ceylon*, p. 168.

389 Godakumbura, *Sinhalese Literature*, p. 144.

390 G. Wijayawardhana, "A Note on the Aesthetic Concept of Rasa-Bhava in Kav-Silumina," *University of Ceylon Review* XXI, no. 1 (April 1963): 76-80.

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his or her existence.[391] In other words, the aesthetic delight of a *rasa* is thought to exist quite apart from the experience of an individual's personal feelings. It thus constitutes a transpersonal experience evoked from without by aesthetic forms. When the feelings or emotions (*bhāva*), whether transitory mental states (*vyabhicāribhāva*) or permanent emotions (*sthāyibhāva*) that manifest in the mind, are nourished to such an extent by the skillful and suggestive use of poetic forms, those *bhava*s may then become the *rasa*s that are realized and enjoyed in an impersonalized manner by the connoiseur.[392] According to this line of thinking, poetic figures of speech and appropriate words, themes, and qualities were deemed capable of evoking these highly refined aesthetic sentiments, and thus they were employed towards this end.

Although we can be certain that Sanskrit poetics was a subject of study in medieval Sri Lanka, we remain considerably less sure about its effect on prose works. While some texts such as the *Sinhala Bodhivaṁśaya* reveal an explicit awarenss of formal *rasa* theory, other texts like the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* appear simply to allude to some of its general theories.[393] Still,

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391 S. K. De, *Sanskrit Poetics as a Study of Aesthetic* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1963), pp. 12-15.

392 G. Wijayawardhana, *Outlines of Sanskrit Poetics* (Varanasi, India: The Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office, 1970), pp. 81-87. As De points out, for example, a spectator can experience the sentiment of grief on stage in a dramatic performance, even going so far as to cry, but still enjoy it without feeling pain personally. See his *Sanskrit Poetics as a Study of Aesthetic*, p. 14.

393 In addition to quoting a couple Sanskrit verses from Kālidāsa and one listing the nine *rasas*, the *Sinhala Bōdhivaṁśaya* supplies an ornate description of the harem women who vainly try to entertain Prince Siddhārtha, which is suggestive, I think, of the overall aesthetic imagination of this Sinhala text:

> At that very moment, the noble women who had formal beauty that was equal to goddesses, taking up the five kinds of instruments that had pleasing sounds, surrounding that Great Person, began to present dancing which was endowed with the nine dramatic sentiments [*nava-nāṭya-rasāḥ*] that seize the mind and which was like divine dancing, singing that was endowed with the seven sounds and which

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there is evidence of the influence and usage of *alaṅkāra* and *rasa* theory in the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa*. Undoubtedly, its narrative is greatly embellished in comparison with the Pāli *Thūpavaṃsa*. The imagery is typically more detailed with a liberal use of similes and metaphors to describe emotions as well as the appearance of characters and settings in the story.[394] Upon inspection of the text, we may even note the use of at least some expressions that strongly resemble the *alaṅkāras* of Sanskrit poetics. In addition to the serial simile mentioned above, we might further highlight a poetic flourish written in the style of a kind of *alaṅkāra* called a *niścaya*. A *niścaya* is identified as a poetic negation wherein a comparison between the object to be compared (*upameya*) and the object of comparison (*upamāna*) is first suggested, and then subsequently rejected with the implication that the *upameya* is superior to the *upamāna*.[395] This kind of poetic description is put into the mouth of the Bodhisattva Sumedha when he first sees Dīpaṅkara Buddha approaching on the road:

> Although I could say that the Noble One, who approaches surrounded by *arahant*s, is like the king of elephants named Chaddanta, who has undertaken a journey surrounded by his army of elephants, I would not

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was like divine singing, and the sounds of the fivefold instruments that included the leather-covered drum and which were equal to divine instruments [*SBōdhv*, p. 18].

Of course, as we know, Prince Siddhārtha fails to be moved by this display and renounces the lay life later that night. But it is worth pointing out that, once again, Vilgammula Thera displays his awareness of *rasa* as an aesthetic concept in composing this text. His usage of a highly sanskritized form of Sinhala, replete with numerous poetic figures of speech and embellished imagery, suggests that his text was at least partly influenced by the conventions, if not the theories themselves, of Sanskrit poetics.

394 It is worth noting that Godakumbura remarks in his *Sinhalese Literature* that the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* "has always been considered to be an excellent piece of literary composition" that has "highly poetic descriptions," (p. 109). Similarly, Kulasuriya has conclusively demonstrated that the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* tends to be richer in terms of description than its Pāli counterpart. See his *Sinhala Sāhityaya I*, p. 205.

395 Wijayawardhana, *Outlines of Sanskrit Poetics*, p. 37.

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> compare him to a beast. Although I could equate him with Sak, the King of the Gods, who is surrounded by the deities of the two divine realms, I would not compare the one who blows the conch to him. Although I could say that he is like the Great Brahmā Sahampati, surrounded by the retinue of *brahmās*, I would not compare the one who performs the duty of holding an umbrella to him. Although I could say that he is like the ocean because he is the support for rivers—namely all good actions, and because he is a mine for jewels—namely the Seven Constituent Factors of Enlightenment, and because he has a series of waves—namely virtues, which do not transgress the shore—namely wisdom, I would not compare the ocean which is mixed with the taste of salt to the Omniscient One who is sweet with the taste of loving-kindness.[396]

This poetic description that alternates between comparison and the rejection of the comparison to extol the virtues of a Buddha employs both negation (*niścaya*) and serial similes (*malopamā*) to embellish the narrative. The Buddha, we learn, is finally incomparable, and this fact should serve to delight us according to the text. The above passage seems to suggest that Parākrama Paṇḍita was at least familiar with some of the poetic devices developed by early Sanskrit writers and replicated by a number of Sinhala authors during the late medieval period.

While the occasional usage of poetic features normally associated with Sanskrit *alaṅkāra*s does not in itself imply that the authors of Sinhala chronicles composed their narratives with classical *rasa* theory in mind, it is still possible to maintain that they viewed the effects of their works in an analogous way. In other words, while a normative and informed view on the nature of *rasa*s may

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396 *SThūp* 4: *[R]ahatun pirivarā vaḍanā uttamayō āt senaga pirivarā gaman gat chaddanta naṁ hasti rājayā vāni sēkāyi kiyaṁ namudu, tirisanakhu upamā no keremi. Dedevlova deviyan visin pirivārū sakdevrajahu hā samāna kereṁ namudu, obaṭa sak piṁbinā tānāttahu upamā no keremi. Brahma sēnāva pirivārū sahampati mahā brahmayā vāni sēkāyi kiyaṁ namudu, obaṭa ma kuḍa gat saras durayehi siṭi tānāttahu upamā no keremi. Siyalu satkāra namāti gaṅgāvanṭa ādhāra heyin da, saptabodhyaṅga dharma namāti ratnayanṭa ākara heyin da, prajñā namāti vēlāntaya ikma no pavatnā guṇa namāti taraṅga paṅktiya āti heyin da, samudraya vāni sēkāyi kiyaṁ namudu, lavaṇa rasayen miśra vū muhuda maitri rasayen madhura vū sarvajñayan vahansēṭa upamā no keremi.*

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be lacking, both *Thūpavaṃsa*s still display suggestions that literature in general, and their narratives in particular, can produce generalized emotions in an audience. I would thus argue that the imitation of poetic conventions borrowed from Sanskrit by Sinhala authors suggests that not only did these authors explicitly view their histories as literary works, but it also illustrates an understanding that they could convey certain sentiments and emotional experiences to a reader or listener through their narratives. Again, following Sumedha's attempt in the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* to compare the Buddha to something else, he is depicted as having realized that mundane similes are not appropriate for a being whose qualities and attainments transcend the world. Realizing that the Buddha can only be compared to himself, Sumedha is described as having "a mind that was pleased by considering various similes."[397] In this instance the emotional response of the audience to the narrative is both prefigured and displayed in a character from the text itself. The use of figurative speech and ornate embellishments in the *vaṃsakathā* of Sri Lanka signals a recognition that narratives could render productive effects in an audience of prospective readers and listeners. As such, history-writing may be described as a discursive form of Buddhist practice, wherein language is employed to transform the emotions and the moral subjectivities of individuals.

Of course the fact remains that such aesthetic techniques appear much more frequently in the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* than the Pāli *Thūpavaṃsa*. Yet this recognition should not obscure the fact that the Pāli version occasionally employs minor poetic flourishes that embellish, however slightly, the

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397 *SThūp* 4: *Noyek upamā sitīmen satuṭu sit ātiva.*

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comparable accounts found in the earlier *Mahāvaṃsa*. For example, upon seeing the miracles displayed by the relics at the Mahāthūpa and having them come to rest in their casket upon his head, King Duṭṭhagāmaṇī is again described as feeling "as if he were imbued with ambrosia" (*rājā amatena viya abhisitto*). Whereas in *Mahāvaṃsa* XXXI. 102, the relic casket simply descends and is established upon the king's head without mentioning his reaction (*tato oruyha caṅgoṭo rañño sīse patiṭṭhahī*). Similarly, when the king is adorned in all his ornaments and surrounded by several thousand female dancers, he is compared in the *Thūpavaṃsa* to Sakka, the King of the Gods, being surrounded by divine damsels.[398] The corresponding verses in the *Mahāvaṃsa* only describe him adorned in all the ornaments and surrounded by his retinue of female dancers and the fourfold army without offering any simile.[399]

Furthermore, at one point in the narrative, the Pāli *Thūpavaṃsa* appears to elaborate upon the historical record for the sake of generating aesthetic sentiments in an audience. The text adds its own poetic touch to the account of the lamentation of the *nāga*s who have had their *doṇa* of relics stolen from them to be enshrined in the Mahāthūpa: "Thereupon all the *nāga*s in the *nāga* realm, having gathered together, releasing their hair, holding their hearts with both hands, and while causing streams of tears to flow from their eyes, which

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398 *Thūp* 241.

399 *Mhv* XXXI. 36-38. In the prolegomena to his translation of the *Mahāvaṃsa*, Guruge similarly notes that the author of the *Mahāvaṃsa* generally prefers straightforward expressions to poetically ornate descriptions. He writes that the attentive reader "is bound to be surprised by the near absence of even the commonest of all figures of speech—the simple simile or metaphor. In this respect, the few descriptive passages—usually long and running into several verses—appear as oases in a vast barren desert," (p. 63).

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resembled blue water-lilies, as if their grief had liquified, . . . "[400] This description that makes use of two similes clearly represents a literary embellishment of the verse it quotes from the *Mahāvaṃsa*, which reads, "While lamenting, the *nāga*s, having come up to the Sangha, lamented in various ways, being grief-stricken over the removal of the relics."[401] The greater emphasis that the *Thūpavaṃsa* gives to the grief and loss felt by the *nāga*s appears well-suited to convey sympathy for those who have been deprived of worshipping the Buddha's relics. In this sense, much like the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa*, the Pāli *Thūpavaṃsa* makes use of figurative speech to embellish episodes designed to stir the emotions and empathy of an audience.

IV. 3 EMOTION AND SUBJECTIVITY

Although the narratives of the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s make use of various aesthetic techniques to give rise to generalized emotions in the model reader or listener, the accounts of the characters in their narratives also show how such emotions condition particular ways of viewing the Buddha and one's relationship to him. Throughout both texts feelings of *pasāda*, *saddhā*, and *kataññū* are routinely said to appear in characters who are reminded of the virtues and power inherent in the Triple Gem while witnessing miracles, seeing figures of exemplary virtue such as Buddhas and monks, and rejoicing in offerings that have been made to the Buddha. Furthermore, we have already

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400 *Thūp* 244: *Tato nāgabhavane sabbe nāgā samāgantvā kese muñcitvā ubhohi hatthehi hadaye gahetvā nīl'uppalasadisehi nettehi vilīnasokam iva assudhāraṃ pavattayamānā.*

401 *Mhv* XXXI. 73: *Paridevamānā āgantvā nāgā saṅghassa santike*
bahudhā paridevimṣu dhātāharaṇadukkhitā

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examined several instances in which the emotional experiences described in the texts are implicitly presumed to be replicated in their readers and listeners. In addition, these texts also implicate readers and listeners in a relationship with the past where one is both the beneficiary of former events and is obligated to respond in kind to what has been done for one's own sake. The subtle emotions that are evoked in the narratives are represented as being transformative and productive of certain habits of thought and feeling that constitute a desireable moral subjectivity for a devotee of the Buddha. In short, the emotions of serene joy, pious confidence, and gratitude are represented as structuring Buddhist practices of veneration and generosity. The narratives of the *Thūpavaṃsa*s, then, skillfully imply that the characters who feel ethically productive emotions and who understand themselves as being the beneficiaries of deeds done in the past represent the ideal Buddhist agents ("*satpuruṣa*s") whom their model readers and listeners are expected to become.

It is no coincidence, then, that the *Thūpavaṃsa*s attribute the same emotional experiences of their characters to their audiences as well. In both narratives, *pasāda*, *saddhā*, and *kataññū* are generated in *bodhisattva*s, monks, kings, and other laypersons when they encounter the Triple Gem through either seeing or hearing about its virtues. The emotional responses of characters in the *Thūpavaṃsa*s depicted in episodes ranging from the awesome miracles of relics to the performance of a simple act of merit mark the expectation that an audience will respond with similar emotions when reading or listening to those narrative accounts. While we usually think of history as merely representing reality and, at most, presenting models to be purposefully followed, the *Thūpavaṃsa*s are

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instead presented as textual agents that can recreate the experiences and subjectivities of the characters they depict. At several points in their narratives, for example, the *Thūpavaṃsa*s imitate the ethical acts depicted in the past. When certain characters remember how the Buddha's Dispensation was established in the past and thus rejoice in this fact, the texts do exactly the same thing for their audiences when they recall those historical events. The audience is thus expected to remember and rejoice in noteworthy past events along with the pious characters in the narrative. Thus, by being "mimetic of themselves," the *Thūpavaṃsa*s recreate for their audiences the emotions and moral awareness of persons in the past through the means of their narratives.[402]

One way in which the *Thūpavaṃsa*s prefigure a moral subjectivity in readers and listeners is through emotions generated through the narrative depiction of pathos. The textual representation of grief and sorrow evokes sympathetic feelings in the audience for the characters therein. It has been shown previously that the narratives found in Buddhist *Jātaka*s and commentarial literature (*aṭṭhakathā*), like all stories, promote a sense of sympathy for others as well as feelings of compassion since the the form of such narratives inevitably encourages imagining ourselves in the place of another being.[403] Likewise, the well-known Vessantara Jātaka contains many tragic elements in its narrative, so that the ultimate triumph of the Bodhisattva's perfection of giving and progression towards Nirvana is palpably felt only in

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[402] The idea of a cultural expression being "mimetic of itself" is something I take from Clifford Geertz in his book *Negara: The Theatre State in Nineteenth-Century Bali* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980). In this impressive study, Geertz explains how the paegentry of state ceremonies in premodern Bali both represented and became the vision of reality presented therein (pp. 103-104, 123-124, 136).

[403] Hallisey and Hansen, "Narrative, Sub-ethics, and the Moral Life," pp. 314-316.

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relation to the sorrow and distress conveyed in the episode where the Bodhisattva gives away his small son and daughter.[404] By making us feel sorry for characters in a story, Buddhist literature works to expand our moral imagination whereby we learn to take the feelings of others into account. Thus, in the context of embellishing narratives to arouse feelings of serene joy, pious confidence, and gratitude, the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s at times employ figures of speech to heighten the pathos that results in imagining and feeling another's grief.

True to form, the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* inserts several episodes wherein the narrator describes feelings of sorrow and distress in an effort to evoke sympathetic feelings in the reader and listener. For instance, the scene where the *nāga*s lament over having their relics stolen by the novice Soṇuttara is greatly elaborated upon in Parākrama Paṇḍita's text. Their sorrow is ingeniuously combined with a discourse in which the *nāga*s try to convince the monks to give back some of the relics since they too suffer in *saṃsāra* and thus are beneficiaries of the Buddha's compassion.[405] Arguing that various *nāga*s, such as King Mucalinda, have helped and honored the Buddha in the past, they too now deserve an opportunity to worship his relics that they had obtained because of their merit and without harming anyone. Their pitiable description and the compelling logic of their argument cause the monks to feel affection (Sinh: *pem*) for the snakes and, at the same time, appear well-designed to arouse sympathy in an audience. Thus, when the *nāga*s obtain a few relics from the

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404 Steven Collins, *Nirvana and Other Buddhist Felicities*, pp. 548-554.

405 See *SThūp* 182-183. For a brief excerpt from this long speech, see above, chapter three, section two.

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monks, the reader or listener can then rejoice along with the *nāga*s in the story who become happy to get some of their relics back. The empathy that is cultivated in such accounts conditions the audience to enter imaginatively into the sentiments and thoughts of others. Indeed, this exercise in empathy helps to construct moral agents who, by definition, must be able to imagine the situation of another when they act.[406]

Yet much of the pathos evoked in the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* revolves around the affection typically felt in kinship relations, and how such ties are rent asunder by renunciation and, more starkly, death. For instance, the text's depiction of the Vessantara Jātaka images that are deposited along with the relics in the Mahāthūpa conveys a palpable sense of the grief felt by Vessantara and Maddīdevī from having their two small children taken away from them.[407] Again, when the Māra daughters assume various forms to try to seduce the newly Awakened Buddha, they also try to make him regret leaving his family:

> Having spoke thus, after the Māra women had left, one [Māra] woman, having taken the form of a familiar female attendant belonging to the house of Yasodhara, coming before him, having venerated him, standing at one side and announcing, 'Lord, by what fault of Yaśodharā did you abandon her? The suffering that pitiful woman experiences from remembering you has no limit. Having seen Prince Rāhula not drinking milk because when she remembers you the hair on her whole body stands on end and the circle of hair on her nipple stabs his mouth, and because warm tears that pour from her long and wide eyes come to her nipple and burn his mouth, I do not even know what is the condition

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406 Lynne Tirrell, "Storytelling and Moral Agency," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 48, no. 2, (Spring 1990), p. 119.

407 See *SThūp* 167-169. Also note that Collins has remarked in this regard that the story of Vessantara enables an audience to contrast the feelings of familial happiness with the sorrow felt in its absence, and in so doing, permits one to imagine the pain caused by an individual's renunciation. See his *Nirvana and Other Buddhist Felicities*, pp. 550-551.

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> up to now of your intimate Yaśodharā who is sorrowful from the grief of your absence.[408]

These words, of course, do not sway the Buddha from giving up his attainment of Buddhahood. Still, they do appear to have been written to move an audience with pity for the loved ones he left behind. In this instance, however, the construction of pathos by the narrative also serves to heighten one's gratitude for what the Buddha did in the past. The above description of the Buddha's wife and son may thus instill an appreciation for the magnitude of the sacrifice that Siddhārtha made when he resolved to leave home and become a Buddha. Moreover, given the fact that such words do not cause the Buddha to forsake his responsibilities for helping all beings, the readers and listeners must conclude that the Buddha rejected the love of those nearest and dearest to him in order to effect the welfare of everyone else—including themselves.

In other words, far from rejecting or devaluing kinship ties and familial affection, the Buddhist narratives in medieval Sri Lanka often recall such obligations and emotions in the service of generating strong feelings in an audience. Whether one reads or listens to, for example, how Siddhārtha struggles to leave his little son and wife behind, or how Vessantara gives away his own children, the feelings of reassurance and gratitude for what the Buddha has acheived are measured by the trauma so vividly portrayed within the

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408 *SThūp* 62-63: *Mesē doḍā ē māra strīn giya pasu ekiyak yaśodharāvangē gehi paraṇa purudu sēvatakagē vilas gena idiriyaṭa avut vāṅdalā ekat pasva siṭa danvannāhu, 'Svāmīni! Yaśodharāvan vahansē kavara varadakin hārapī sēk da? Ē kamkiḷi tenāttiya numba vahansē saṅdahan kirīmen viṅdinā duk pamaṇa nāta. Saṅdahan kaḷa viṭa sarvāṅgayē loṁ keḷin siṭi kala tana puḍuva vaṭa loṁ kaṭa āṇena heyin hā digu puḷul vū āsin vāgirena huṇu kaṅdulu tana puḍuyehi vādagena kaṭadana heyin kiri no bona rāhula kumārayan dāka, numba vahansē gē viyō dukin tāvena purudu yaśodharāvan metekaṭa kumak bavat no danimi.*

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spheres of marital and family life.[409] It is significant to note in this regard that Sri Lankan Buddhist tradition holds that great merit is obtained by the parents whose child enters the Sangha. Thus, the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s both relate that even after building eighty-four thousand monasteries, King Aśoka is told that to become an "heir" (P: *dāyādo*) who is "included" (Sinh: *himiyōya*) in the Dispensation, he must have a son or daughter enter the monastic order.[410] At the same time, however, such familial ties are often depicted to be strong and hard to give up.[411] The sacrifice made by King Aśoka when he permits his son and daughter to leave for Laṅkā is thus his loss but our gain when seen from the perspective of the readers and listeners of the *Thūpavaṃsa*s. The figure of Aśoka has commanded respect and reverence in Sri Lanka to this day largely since, I would argue, Sri Lankans have been taught to appreciate the great personal loss he took upon himself for the sake of spreading Buddhism to their country. One may well feel sorry for the king who, like Yaśodharā, was left behind, but the texts also construct an emotive response of gratitude since the

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409 Again in his *Nirvana and Other Buddhis Felicities*, Collins arrives at a similar conclusion about the Vessantara Jātaka (p. 554). See p. 554. See also John Strong, "A Family Quest: The Buddha, Yaśodharā, and Rāhula in the *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya*," in Schober, ed., *Sacred Biography in the Buddhist Traditions of South and Southeast Asia*, wherein he notes how a Sanskrit version of Siddhārtha's Great Departure clearly illustrates that the act of renunciation has long been imagined to have significant effects on the family left behind (pp. 122-124).

410 *Thūp* 191; *SThūp* 95-96.

411 See, for example, how the *Sinhala Bōdhivaṁśaya* elaborates upon the account in *Mahāvaṃsa* XVIII. 13-22 where Aśoka laments his daughter Sanghamitta's decision to go to Laṅkā in order to ordain Queen Anulā:

> Venerable lady! That Mahāthera Mihiiñdu, who is my son, and the novice Sumana, who is my grandson, have gone to Laṅkādvīpa, crushing my body as it were. The grief that arises for me, who does not see these two, is allayed by seeing your face-lotus. Now, while sinking in the ocean—namely grief, which is produced by the absence of my son, how could you go?' [*SBōdhv* 219].

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ordination of Mahinda and Saṅghmitta contributed directly to the establishment of the Buddha's Dispensation in the island of Laṅkā.

Thus, we see how the bonds idealized as commonly found in family relations can yield powerful emotions that give rise to a sense of being implicated in relationships of dependence upon the Buddha and other virtuous agents in the past. As such, these emotions of serene joy, pious confidence, and gratitude that are generated in historical narratives serve to constitute the readers and listeners as moral agents who act to satisfy the expectations that arise out of their relationships to the past. The deeply felt and often complicated feelings of gratitude and obligation that distinguish familial relationships similarly give expression to how the characters in the narratives—and, in turn, the readers and listeners—regard themselves as moral subjects who are dependent upon what the Buddha has done for them. As such, in as much as the audience can empathize and identify with characters in the texts, they too are led to imagine themselves in a similar relationship with the Buddha. What the Buddha did in the past suddenly acquires tremendous relevance for the readers and listeners of the *Thūpavaṃsa*s. For example, in the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa*, the scene where Siddhārtha goes to take a final look at his son Rāhula before renouncing invites the audience to reflect upon their apparent importance to the Buddha:

> Should I stroke the child? Were the small palm of this child, who is tender and delicate, to touch my neck, it would be like a noose placed on my neck in order not to permit me to go to become a Buddha. How can I rescue twenty-four incalculables of children with the affection directed towards a single son?[412]

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412 *SThūp* 26: *Daruvan sanahā piyaṁ do hō' yi sitā, 'Ḷaňda boḷaňda mē daruvangē atulsaňga kara vākuṇē naṁ buduvanṭa no yā denu piṇisa kara lū malak vānna. Ek puṭaṇuvan kerehi kaḷa snehayen sūvisi asaṅkhyayak daruvan kesē goḍalaṁ da?*

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Of course, we know that Siddhārtha manages to tear himself away from his family and renounce the household life on the way to becoming a Buddha. That soliloquoy serves to remind us, however, that the Buddha's renunciation was not seen simply as a rejection of family bonds in an effort to seek Enlightenment alone.[413] In fact the Buddha/Bodhisattva expresses the view that those of us in the audience are all his children, and thus the narrative affirms the value of the emotional bonds of parental love by using this image as a trope for the generalized compassion of the Buddha for all beings.

Moreover, it is in the salient terms of familial ties and affection that the *parinirvāṇa* of the Buddha is portrayed in our texts. For instance, the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa*'s account of the Buddha's final Nirvana is presented as something akin to the death of one's own mother. When the Buddha, who earlier described all beings as his "twenty-four incalculables of children," reaches the point of death, the text reads, "the Mother of Ambrosia who is my Lord passed away in complete Nirvana without material remainder."[414] The metaphor of the Buddha as a mother compares his kindness and compassion in dispensing the ambrosia of Dhamma with a mother who nurses her child. Not surprisingly then the event of his death is accompanied by great sorrow and lamentation by

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413 One encounters this selfless speech again when the soon-to-be Buddha recalls his perfection of renunciation in a previous lifetime as King Cullasutasōma. Therein, he says, "If I remain out of affection towards this one son, how then will I release about twenty-four incalculables of children who will experience the sufferings of *saṃsāra* in the future?" See *SThūp* 36: *Idin mama mē ek putaku kerē snēhayen rāñdīm naṁ matu sūvisi asaṅkhyayak pamaṇa sasara duk viṅdinā daruvan kesē naṁ galavaṁ dā yi.*

414 *SThūp* 69: *Nirupadhiśeṣa nirvāṇa dhātuven māgē svāmi vū amāmāṅiyan vahansē pirīnivan pā vadāḷa sēka.* Charles Hallisey has noted in a personal communication that this epithet could also be taken as "My Deathless Mother," which creates a thought-provoking paradox over how one who is held to be beyond death has passed away. The ambiguity over how to translate "*amā*" (P: *amata*; Skt: *amṛta*) functions productively to highlight both the Buddha's compassion and his attainment of Nirvana.

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everyone except for the *arahants*, who remain characteristically detached about the dissolution of the body.[415] The lamentation of King Ajātaśatru (P: Ajātasattu), who at first faints three times in vats of cool liquids after being informed thrice of the Buddha's passing away, brings this loss into particularly sharp relief:

> Thereupon the ministers, having lifted the king from that vat, washing him with scented water, sprinkling cold water on his head, they informed the king who had thus regained consciousness of the fact that the Buddha had passed away in complete Nirvana. The king who heard those words, rising up from the seat in which he sat, having released the tresses of the hair on his head that were annointed with the scent from various kinds of perfumes such as musk-lime, camphor, aloe, the *takul* nut, and musk, and that were very black, smooth, and soft, and letting them down in the middle of his wide back that was like a golden slab, and while beating on his chest with his palms, that were red and soft, and that had the color similar to a red lotus, he started to weep from the grief that split open his heart. The king, as if being unable to bear this, saying, What is this? Svāmidaruvō!,' and weeping with great sobs in the manner of one who has fallen mad, having gone down to the royal road being accompanied by his ministers and sixteen thousand female dancers, and setting off from the city, went to Jīvaka's mango grove [to grieve at the spot where he once heard the Buddha speak].[416]

This and other displays of grief form a pattern in which feelings of pathos and gratitude are stimulated by emotional displays in the narrative itself. Emotions depicted in the text and generated in an audience encourages the formation of a moral subjectivity, or the way that one understands oneself in relation to others.

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415 *SThūp* 69. It should be noted that unlike *SThūp*, the Pāli *Thūpavaṃsa* does not depict the Malla kings lamenting the death of the Buddha immediately upon hearing that news (*Thūp* 170). They do however weep when they first see the relics which remain from his cremated body (*Thūp* 177-178).

416 *SThūp* 76: *Ikbiti amātyayō rajjuruvan ē deṇin osavāgena suvaňda pānin nāvā his mudunehi sihil pān salā, me lesa sīsanna labā gena hun rajjuruvanṭa budun pirinivan pā̆ bāv dānvūya. Ē bas āsul rajjuruvō hunasnen nāňgī, kasturu, kaluvāl, takul, jabādu, ādī aneka prakāra vū suvaňdin suvaňda galvana lada ati nīla vū siniňdu vū, moḷok vū, hisa kē vāṭiya mudā, ran pōruvak vāni tamangē paḷal piṭa demāda helā, rat vū moḷok vū atul telen rat piyumakaṭa baňdu vū pāhā āti karatala ḷehi gasa gasā, ḷaya pāḷena śokayen haňḍanṭa vanha. Raja no ivasannākhu men, ' Mē kimek da? Svāmidaruvāṇeni!' yi maha haňḍin haňḍā viyaruhuṇu lesin amātyayan hā soḷos dahasak nāṭaka strīn pirivaraṇa laduva rāja vīthiyaṭa bāsa, nuvarin nikma jīvakayangē aṁba uyanaṭa giyēya.*

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Such generalized emotions, moreover, contribute to an ethical transformation wherein one views oneself and one's obligations to others in a new light.

In the case of Ajātaśatru, the audience comes to sympathize with the mournful loss of his friend. The pitiful description of his sorrow may, in turn, exert an influence over how we imagine and react to the death of the Buddha ourselves. The aesthetically rich description of the king's appearance and response to that unfortunate news attracts the attention of an audience while simultaneously constructing a highly emotional manner of relating to the Buddha. Yet, in this moment of sorrow, the readers and listeners are taught to remember that an emotional involvement with the Buddha does not forestall obligations to honor him. Thus, at the point where Ajātasattu ceases to lament, he immediately resolves to go get some relics to which he can make offerings:

> [T]he king who was weeping thought thus, 'There is no purpose that is accomplished by my weeping. Although the Buddha who is endowed with the Ten Physical Powers [*kāyabala dasayakin*] and the Ten Cognitive Powers [*jñāṇabala dasayakin*] has passed away in complete Nirvana, is it not right that I too obtain a share of the relics?[417]

After the king has recalled the virtues of the Buddha and remembers how he cared for himself, emotions of sadness are transformed into feelings of obligation. Likewise, feelings similar to those expressed by the characters in the narrative can also convey certain sentiments to an audience that serve to pattern their relationship to the Buddha. An emotional connection with the Buddha is depicted to lead naturally to efforts to venerate his physical remains. Indeed, the

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417 *SThūp* 77: *Rajjuruvō mesē sitūya. 'Mā hāṅḍimen siddha vannā vū kaṭayuttek nāta, kāyabala dasayakin hā jñāṇabala dasayakin yukta vū budurajāṇan vahansē pirinivan pāvat obagē dhātūn vahansēgen bhāgayak māt ladamanā vē dā' yi.* On the notion of the Buddha possessing two kinds of Ten Powers, which in turn largely determines his personality in the Pāli commentarial literature, see Endo, *Buddha in Theravada Buddhism*, pp. 79-84.

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descriptions of the Buddha as a mother as well as the intense feelings over his death signify a measure of intimacy and gratitude that few other metaphors could ever suggest.

Therefore, like Ajātaśatru, the readers and listeners who encounter the *Thūpavaṃsas* are expected to feel grateful for what the Buddha has done for their sake. In this way, the emotions that are prefigured by the narratives of the *Thūpavaṃsas* work to construct a dependent devotee. Both texts begin by stating that the Bodhisattva aspired towards Buddhahood in order to rescue all beings. Rather than entering Nirvana "with an unknown identity" (*aññātakavesena*), the Bodhisattva Sumedha resolves, "having attained the highest enlightenment like the Ten-Powered One Dīpaṅkara, pulling out humanity from the ocean of *saṃsāra* and placing them upon the ship of Dhamma, I should pass away in complete Nirvana afterwards."[418] Thus, right from the start, the model reader or listener is fashioned as one who needs to be rescued by the Buddha. As a "mother," the Buddha is thought to assume the responsibility to care for the well-being of his "children." Thus, in the course of retelling Buddhist history, the *Thūpavaṃsas* lead its audiences to accept the role of a helpless child. For instance, when King Ajātaśatru laments the passing away of the Buddha, he gratefully recognizes that, "As for now, he fulfilled the Perfections in *saṃsāra* for such a devotee [as myself]."[419] Again, the king's feelings of loss are gradually transformed into the understanding that the Buddha has already made it possible for even him, a patricide, to attain

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[418] *Thūp* 150: *Yannūnāhaṃ dīpaṅkaradasabalo viya paramābhisambodhiṃ patvā dhammanāvaṃ āropetvā mahājanaṃ saṃsārasāgarā uttāretvā pacchā parinibbāyeyyaṃ.*

[419] *SThūp* 77: *Dān vanāhi ebaṅdu gättavuṭa sasara pāramitā pirū nuṁba vahansē.*

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desireable felicities. Readers and listeners of the story are likewise conditioned to see themselves as dependent on those who cared for them in the past. The Dhamma has been taught, and now "we" as the Buddha's incalculable children stand to benefit. In the course of such narratives, the emotions represented in the characters similarly involves and implicates the audience in a relationship with the Buddha akin to that which is commonly found in family life with all its intimacies and obligations.

While being depicted in deeply personal terms, the Buddha is portrayed in the manner of a mother who cares for her children with immeasurable compassion and concern. Yet unlike a mother whose love is directed especially to her own children, the Buddha is shown to have affection for all beings who collectively constitute his "children." This contrast is clearly shown in the recollection of the story of the Bodhisattva as Prince Tēmiya in the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa*. Briefly, while trying to achieve the Perfection of Resolution (Sinh: *adhiṣṭhāna*), the young Tēmiya assumes the appearance of one who is mute, deaf, and crippled for sixteen years. When he is condemned to death by his father, the king, he still refuses to move or speak to save his life and alleviate the suffering of his mother:

> That night the Mother-queen, having pleaded, 'Son! Prince Temiya! This king of Kasī has ordered to bury you in a cemetery. Will you save yourself from death tomorrow? Son!,' she weeped. Having heard those words, the Five Kinds of Happiness arose in the Svāmidaruvō, who was thinking [to himself],'Prince Tēmiya, your suffering which has been endured for sixteen years will come to a head.' Then thinking, 'Sorrow to the extent of bursting the heart of my esteemed mother has

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arisen. [But] my wish not being fulfilled would be bad,' you did not speak up.[420]

In this way, the Bodhisattva displays that his love for the entire world supercedes his love for his mother. While she understandably directs her motherly love towards her own son, the Bodhisattva's (and, by extension, the Buddha's) love is impartially given to all beings, so that the audience can again see themselves as his children, having been cared for by the Buddha in the past.[421] Thus, all beings may feel grateful for the sacrifices that the Buddha and Bodhisattva's made, even while feeling sympathetic grief for his family members who may have been hurt in the process. Such emotional appeals to family ties, which are particularly emphasized in the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa*, convey a sense of personal intimacy involved in the Buddha's efforts for one's own behalf.

It is in the light of the Buddha's evident care and compassion for all beings that the narratives of Buddhist histories link the aesthetics of emotional response with the ethics of being made a subject dependent upon past events.

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420 *SThūp* 47: *Edā rā̊ mav bisav ārādhanā koṭa, 'Puta! Tēmiya kumārayēni! Mē kasī rajjuruvō topa amusohonehi vaḷalā piyaṇṭa kivuya. Seṭa davasa maraṇin midenavā da? Putā' yi hāṇḍūha. E bas asā, 'Tēmiya kumārayeni! Topa soḷos havuruddak gat duk mudun pāmiṇennēya' yi sitana svāmidaruvāṇaṇṭa pasvaṇak prīti upana. 'Māṇiyandāgē ḷaya pāḷī yana taraṁ śoka upana, esē kalhi, māgē manadoḷa no pirennē napurā' yi bāṇa no nāngi sēka.* Note that the "Five Kinds of Joy" refers to a technical term that consists of grades of happiness experienced during the first trance state (P: *jhāna*) of meditation, namely—1) *khuddikā-pīti* : "minor happiness," 2) *khaṇikā pīti*: "momentary happiness," 3) *okkantikā-pīti*: "showering happiness," 4) *ubbegā-pīti*: "uplifting happiness," and 5) *pharaṇā-pīti*: "pervading happiness." See, for example, *Vism* IV. 94-95.

421 In this regard, I take issue with Richard Gombrich's interpretation of what he calls "the bizarre story" concerning Prince Tēmiya. While Gombrich sees the *Mūgapakkha Jātaka* as a story that reflects traditional Buddhist distaste for statecraft, I would stress instead that Tēmiya's story, as narrated in the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa*, teaches people about the Buddha's love for them as evidenced in the suffering he took upon himself and gave to others close to him for the sake of the world. For Gombrich's remarks, see his *Theravāda Buddhism: A Social History from Ancient Benares to Modern Colombo* (London and New York: Routledge, 1988), p. 70.

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The Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s present the story of the Buddha's relics in a such a way as to make their readers and listeners feel gratitude for all the efforts made to enshrine his remains in *dāgāba*s in Sri Lanka. From the perspective of the audience, one may mourn the passing away of the Buddha when one recalls the sermons he preached, the miracles he performed, and the instances when he caused people and gods to become enlightened. Yet, at the same time, the texts show how we, as the model readers and listeners foreseen therein, should also feel gratitude for the Buddha's resolution to disperse his relics upon his death:

> Because our Buddha did not remain for much time, desiring the welfare of the world, thinking, 'My Dispensation has not been spread into every place. Taking the relics that measure even a mustard seed from me when I have passed away in complete Nirvana, making *dāgāba*s in the places where people dwell, and enshrining the relics in caskets, the many beings who make offerings will enjoy the happiness of the divine world, the *brahmā* world, and the human world,' he made a resolution for the scattering of the relics.[422]

The above passage effectively frames the entire history of the Buddha's relics in terms of a gift that he gave for the sake of all. While similarly stated in the Pāli *Thūpavaṃsa*, the use of the first person possessive pronoun "*apagē*" in the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* further strengthens the emotional involvement of an audience with the story of the Buddha's life and the dispersal of his relics.[423]

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[422] *SThūp* 72-73: *Apagē budurajāṇan vahansē bohō kalak vāḍa no siṭi heyin, lovaṭa vāḍa kāmativa 'Māgē śāsanaya hāmatānhi ma vistīrṇa novīya. Pirinivan pāvā vū māgen aba āṭal pamaṇa dhātūn vahansē gena tama taman vasannā vū sthānayehi dāgab koṭa karaṅduvala vaḍā pūjā karana bohō janayō divyaloka brahmaloka manuṣya lokayehi sampat anubhava karannāhuya' yi dhātūn vahansē visirīmaṭa adhiṣṭhāna koṭa vadāḷa sēka.*

[423] Cf. the episode in the *Thūpavaṃsa*: "But the Meritorious One, thinking, 'I will pass away in complete Nirvana without remaining [here] for a long time. My Dispensation has not yet spread everywhere. Therefore, when I have passed away in complete Nirvana, taking a relic even as small as a mustard seed, building a shrine [*cetiyaṃ*] in each one's place of residence, while worshipping it, let the people be destined for heaven,' he made a resolution for the dispersal of his relics." See *Thūp* 172: *Bhagava' pana, ahaṃ na ciraṃ ṭhatvā parinibbāyāmi, mayhaṃ sāsanaṃ na tāva sabbattha vitthāritaṃ, tasmā parinibbutassa pi me sāsapamattam pi dhātuṃ gahetvā attano attano vasanaṭṭhāne cetiyaṃ katvā paricaranto mahājano saggaparāyano hotū' ti dhātūnaṃ vikiraṇaṃ adhiṭṭhāsi.*

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While pathos is evoked in the scene of the Buddha's death, the narratives of both *Thūpavaṃsa*s quickly remind the audience that his relics were spread for their benefit. As the venerable Mahinda explains in both texts, without seeing the Buddha in the form of his bodily relics, one feels despondent over the absence of a place for venerating and making offerings.[424] Yet the narratives repeatedly show that the beings who do worship his relics at *dāgāba*s arouse serene joy and, in doing so, stand to gain merit leading to fortunate rebirths and Nirvana.

In this way, the emotions generated by the texts contribute to angles of vision with which the model readers and listeners are conditioned to view themselves and the world. Feelings of pleasure and pathos may alternately be generated by the skillful use of language to engage an audience and provoke them into seeing how they themselves have been profoundly affected by historical events. Feelings of serene joy and gratitude thus develop from learning what the Buddha and other virtuous figures have done in the past. The act of recalling the virtues of the Triple Gem, which we have noted is Buddhaghosa's recipe for producing serene joy, is a practice that became intimately connected with history-writing in medieval Sri Lanka. Indeed, recalling the stories of what the Buddha, the Bodhisattva, renowned monks, and pious kings did in the past constitutes a technique for creating an audience that feels grateful for being the beneficiaries of their acts to penetrate the Dharma and spread the Dispensation. After all, the relics enshrined in *dāgāba*s formerly are still held to benefit the audience of the texts. It is significant, though hardly

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424 *Thūp* 197; *SThūp* 102.

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a coincidence, that the Pāli word for "grateful" —*kataññū*, literally means "one who knows what was done."[425] This etymological point supports the idea that history and gratitude were envisioned as complementary and mutually reinforcing in premodern Sri Lanka.

The values attributed to remembering the past and the gratitude that comes from doing so appear conspicuously at various points in the narratives of the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsas*. Several key characters in their texts are periodically shown to reflect upon the past at moments when they feel serene joy and engage in moral action. For instance, the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* describes how the newly Awakened Buddha responds with gratitude towards the Bodhi Tree under which he sat to attain his Enlightenment:

> [H]aving looked at the Diamond Seat of fourteen cubits on which he himself sat, saying, 'Innumerable are the times that, having cut with the sword in my hand, I gave my own head which was adorned with the crown, excelling the Great Meru Mountain that has a height of one hundred and sixty-eight thousand leagues, for the sake of this seat. Innumerable are the times when I plucked out and gave my eyes which shone with the five colors, excelling the stars in the sky. Innumerable are these many births in which, having split open my own chest, having given over my heart, falling down, and moistening my eyes with tears that poured forth with joy, I died from a death of happiness. Having bound and given over the gems of sons like Prince Jāliya, the gems of daughters like Kṛṣṇa Jinā, and wives like Madridēvī to beggars, as if having bound and brought one's own enemies, and having made them slaves and given them over to outcastes, I remained joyful,' thus if one were to narrate the number of births which took place, one could not count them until one passes away into complete Nirvana.
>
> Therefore, saying 'Having taken on suffering equal to this much, I will not forsake the seat [of Wisdom] which has been obtained,' and having sat for an entire week,. . . having displayed the Twin Great Miracle, dispelling the doubt of the gods, and saying, 'Having shaken the hundred-league Parasatu Tree of the gods and having shaken the Paḷol

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425 I should like to thank Charles Hallisey for pointing this fact out to me. Furthermore, it is worth noting that the Sinhala word for gratitude—*keḷehi*—appears to have a similar etymology that may be roughly translated as "in what was done."

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> Tree of the *asuras*, I am able to offer endless flowers to the Bodhi Tree, which did not abandon me when Vasavarti Māra came charging while all the gods and *brahmās* were fleeing. Having completely drained the body of water in the great ocean, scooping out the Seven Riches, I am able to offer and spread them over the entire world. Having completely overturned the Great Meru of one hundred and sixty-eight thousand leagues as if a ball of cotton, taking the powder of the Seven Riches which is kept underneath, I am also able to spread it completely from the foot of this tree up to the World-Realm Mountain. But all these are not fitting offerings for me. I will make an offering with my eyes to this Bodhi Tree, which has given rise to the eye—namely Omniscient Knowledge, for me,' and without closing his two eyes throughout seven days, [he] made an offering to the Bodhi Tree with the radiance of the five colors that shone forth from them.[426]

It is readily apparent from the above quotation that the narrator of the text explains one of the Buddha's first acts upon attaining Enlightenment in terms of gratitude. Since the Bodhi Tree assisted him in his attainment, he displays an impulse to make an offering (*pūjā*) in return. The Buddha's gratitude is explicitly shown by his decision to stay seated in the Seat of Enlightenment for seven more days, and also by his subsequent reasoning that he must make an offering by gazing upon the tree that had helped him when he was in need.

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426 *SThūp* 56-57: *Taman vahansē vāḍa un tudus riyan vajrāsanaya balā vadārā, 'mē paḷaṅga piṇisa eklakṣa aṭasāṭa dahasak yodun usa āti mahāmeru parvataya parayā aha voṭunu paḷan his mā ata kaḍuven mā ma kapā dun kal gaṇan nāta. Ākāśayehi tārakā parayā pas pā disnā ās udurā dun kal gaṇan nāta. Mā ma ḷaya paḷā piyā hadavata dīlā vāṭihī satuṭin vāhena kaṅduven nuvan tet koṭa suva maraṇin maḷa jāti metekāyi gaṇan nāta. Jāliya jumārayan vāni put ruvan hā kṛṣṇajināvan vāni dū ruvan hā madrīdēvīn vāni bhāryyāvan hā yācakayaṇṭa bāṅda dīlā tamāgē saturan bāṅdgena avut caṇḍālayaṇṭa gāti koṭa dīlā satuṭuva hiṅdinā sākā' yi siṭi jāti gaṇan kiyathot pirinivan pānā turu ema gāṇagata no hākka.*

Esē heyin metek sā duk gena lat paḷaṅga noharimi. Saddavasak muḷullehi vāḍa hiṅda...yamāmahapeḷahara dakvā deviyangē sāka durukoṭa, 'Vasavarti Māraya divagena ā kala siyalu devi bambun palāyādī mā hāra nogiyā vū bōdhi vṛkṣayaṭa deviyangē siyak yodun parasatu ruk salā da, asurayangē paḷol ruka salā da, ananta mal pudathot pohosatmi. Mahā samudrayehi diya kaṅda siṅdapiyā satruvan ukāgena muḷu poḷova atuṭa pudathot pohosatmi. Eklakṣa aṭasāṭa dahasak yodun mahamera pulun pedak sē peraḷā piyā yaṭi piṭa tubū satruvan vāli gena mē ruka mula paṭan sakvaḷagala dakvā atuṭalatat pohosatmi. Mē hāma maṭa sudusu pūjā naṁ noveyi. Maṭa sarvajñātājñānaya namāti āsa sādā dun mē bodhi vṛkṣayaṭa māgē āsin pūjā keremi,' yi satdavasak muḷullehi de āsa nopiyā eyin nikmena pasvaṇak pāhāyen bodhi pūjākoṭa.

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As the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s make known what happened in the past, they give rise to feelings of joy and gratitude towards those virtuous ones who have acted for the benefit of contemporary readers and listeners. In this way, the texts implicate the reader and listener in a relationship with the Buddha wherein they come to see themselves as the subjects or recipients of his acts. That subjectivity is effected through the evocation of emotions in encounters with the narratives. The expectation that emotions of serene joy, pious confidence, and gratitude described within the text would be reproduced without is alluded to in several episodes where characters in the texts are transformed when they recall events in the past. For instance, immediately after the *Thūpavaṃsa*s narrate the numerous and magnificent offerings enshrined with the relics in the Mahāthūpa, they insert a story whereupon a pious king does the same for an audience of devotees. After the king named Bhātiya is taken inside the relic chamber of the Mahāthūpa by the *arahant*s, he has replica figures made of the offerings and subsequently describes what he saw inside the *thūpa*.[427] Recalling the offerings that were made earlier by King Duṭṭhagāmaṇī through words and images, King Bhātiya is said to have produced serene joy in the audience. The entire night spent describing the offerings in the Mahāthūpa is represented as an ethical act done by the king for the benefit of others. Of course, we realize that the text is engaged in the same process as the narrative describes at length many of the offerings that were made to the relics. In this way, the text implicitly assumes a similar role in producing serene joy in the audience. The Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s are

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[427] *Thūp* 236-237; *SThūp* 173.

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thus "mimetic of themselves" in that they imitate actions undertaken by moral agents in the narrative.

Again, the *Thūpavaṃsa*s imitate the ethical activity described in their narratives when they recount how certain characters are led to recall the offerings that they have made to the Triple Gem in the past. In the final chapter, the *arahant* Theraputtābhaya consoles the dying King Duṭṭhagāmaṇī and enjoins him to recall all the meritorious deeds he has done up till then. The narrators of the *Thūpavaṃsa*s then present a long list of deeds from the building of monasteries and *dāgaba*s to the offering of a small amount of food to a single monk, effectively making the reader and listener recall the meritorious acts of the king as well. Then when Duṭṭhagāmaṇī resolutely states that he is most pleased about the two instances when he gave the little food he had to a monk while he himself remained impoverished and hungry, the Thera commends him by saying "You aroused serene joy at exactly the place where serene joy is to be aroused."[428] This message is also directed to the audience, as they are conditioned to empathetically rejoice in those offerings that yield great fruit as they were: 1) obtained righteously, 2) given without consideration for oneself, 3) given to fulfill the interests of the recipients, 4) given with joy and pious confidence, and 5) enjoyed fully by the recipients.[429] Thus, the act of recalling the king's meritorious deeds and the resultant feeling of serene joy takes place at two levels. From one perspective, they take place within the

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[428] *Thūp* 251: *Pasādanīyaṭṭhane yeva pasādaṃ akāsi.* Cf. the comparable account in the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa*: "Lord! You aroused serene joy in the very place where one ought to arouse serene joy in mind." See *SThūp* 193-194: *Devayeni! Sita pahadavā gatamanā tena ma prasāda eḷavuva.*

[429] *Thūp* 251-252; *SThūp* 194.

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narratives as historical events. Yet, at the same time, the audience is enjoined to recall those deeds along with the king and to feel serene joy for the meritorious acts of another. Again, as we noted above, rejoicing in another's acts of merit may likewise produce beneficial fruits, even in an audience that recalls them several generations after the fact.

Then, as to emphasize the point, the *Thūpavaṃsa*s again imitate the description in the narrative by showing the fruit of the merit performed by King Duṭṭhagāmaṇī. While lying out in the open and looking at the Mahāthūpa, the king passes away. At this point both the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s replicate the work of the narrative for their prospective audiences. The following excerpt is taken from the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa*, which elaborates upon an essentially similar account found in the Pāli *Thūpavaṃsa*:

> The king who heard those words, making an inclination [to go] to the Tusita Abode, and while looking at the Ruvanmāli Dāgāba that he had built, having lied down and died, and being [re-]born as a deity that is spontaneously born in the chariot that was brought from the Tusita Abode, like one who, having slept, has [suddenly] awakened, and standing in the chariot in order to show the fruit of the merit that he had done to the people, being decorated with ornaments that fill sixty cartloads, and while the many people were looking on, descending from the chariot, venerating and circumambulating the Ruvanmāli Dāgāba three times, venerating the ninety six crores of *arahant*s, and requesting permission [to take his leave] from the citizens who included his younger brother, saying, 'Having regarded the divine prosperity which has been obtained by me, perform acts of merit without hesitation at all times,' and having thus exhorted everyone, he went to the divine world called the Tusita Abode.[430]

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430 *SThūp* 195-196: *E bas āsū rajjuruvō tusita bhavanayehi ālaya koṭa taman bāñda vū ruvanmāli dāgap vahansē bala balā ma vādaheva miya nidā pibidiyakhu men tusita bhavanayen genā rathayehi opapātika divya putrava ipada taman kaḷa kusala vipākaya mahajanayāṭa prakāśa karanu piṇisa rathayehi ma siṭa sāṭagālak purālana ābharaṇayen sāra hī bohō denā bala balā siṭiyadīma rathayen bāsa, tunviṭak ruvanmāli dāgap vahansē väñda pādakuṇu koṭasa yānū keḷak rahatun vahansē väñda, avakāśa ilvā gena malaṇuvan ātuḷu vū rājya vāsīṇṭa 'Mā laddā vū divya sampat balā hāma vēlehi ma nopamāva pinkaṁ karava' yi siyallaṇṭa avavāda koṭa tusita bhavana naṁ devlovaṭa giyāha.* Cf. *Thūp* 253.

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Here the king, having been reborn spontaneously as a god (Sinh: *opapātika divyaputrava ipada*), stands up to exhibit the splendor he has obtained from the merit earned from previous actions. The text thus imitates the king when it describes his splendid appearance with the sixty cart-loads of ornaments that adorn his divine body. The moral ramifications of this display of splendor are explained by the king's speech, explicitly linking the fruits of merit with the earlier performance of meritorious acts. The description in the narrative thus assumes the same function as the alleged historical act itself, conflating the audience outside the text with the audience inside the text to arouse serene joy and pious confidence in the efficacy of Buddhist practice. Having displayed the results of King Duṭṭhagāmaṇī's meritorious deeds, the narrative likewise urges the audience to perform meritorious acts and aspire towards a good rebirth. Moreover, like the ninety-six crores of *arahants* who come to pay final respects to the dying king out of gratitude for the fact that he "had rendered great service to both the world and the Dispensation of the Buddha that will remain throughout five thousand years," latter day audiences would be expected to react similarly with gratitude towards a king who enabled the Dispensation to exist for them.[431]

The emotions that are prefigured as responses to the narratives of the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsas* are thus not only aesthetically beautiful and ethically productive as wholesome states of mind, but they also are conducive to

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431 *SThūp* 190: *Budurajāṇan vahansēgē pasvādahas muḷullehi pavatnā lōkaśāsana dekaṭa bohō upakārī vū duṭugāmuṇu rajugē suvaduk vicāranu piṇisa ē ē tānin ahasin vāḍi bhikṣūngen sayānu keḷak pamaṇa rahatun vahansē.*

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mapping out the relationship that one has with the Buddha. Along with rhetorical uses of first and second person pronouns that work to involve the audience with the narrative and the marvellous descriptions of the Buddha as an incomparable lord, the mimetic reproduction of emotions in the audience works toward transforming the ways that readers and listeners of Buddhist history exist in the world. The serene joy, pious confidence, and gratitude that is prefigured by the narration of what the Buddha has done in the past also expresses the relationship with the Buddha that the *Thūpavaṃsa*s attempt to construct. The miraculous displays of the Buddha may well seem astonishing, but they are represented as acts done for the benefit of the beings in the world. Thus, the description of his efforts to provide the Dhamma and his relics as two means to better the lives of all living beings are meant to generate feelings of *pasāda*, *saddhā*, and *kataññū* in an audience that is made to feel dependent upon past acts for their present and future well-being. To the readers and listeners of the *Thūpavaṃsa*, the life of the Buddha from his *bodhisattva* vow as Sumedha up to his dying resolution that his relics be dispersed and worshipped forms the backdrop for making sense of history and for experiencing the emotions that are prefigured in the narrative.[432]

The emphasis given to the story of the Bodhisattva in both texts recalls virtues that were cultivated and reminds the audience of the many trials he undertook to gain Enlightenment for the welfare of the world. The spread and

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[432] In this regard it is significant that, in contrast to the *Dīpavaṃsa* and *Mahāvaṃsa*, neither *Thūpavaṃsa* opens with a recollection of the Buddha's three visits to Sri Lanka nor do they devote much space to explaining how he was born in the lineage of ancient kings beginning with Mahāsammata. Instead, both texts begin their narratives with the story of the ascetic Sumedha followed by brief accounts of the subsequent twenty-three predictions the Bodhisattva received by former Buddhas. Cf. *Dīp* I-III; *Mhv* I-II, VII-X.

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enshrining of relics is similarly represented as past events done for the sake of those yet to come. Therefore, the history contained in the *Thūpavaṃsa*s presumes to transform people affectively and cognitively by making them aware of what the Buddha has done for them long ago. Yet, in the course of making people feel grateful, the *Thūpavaṃsa*s also distance the figure of the Buddha from ordinary humanity, stressing his extraordinary and supremely compassionate qualities. The Buddha is extolled upon his death in the Pāli *Thūpavaṃsa* for what he does for "our" sake. As such, a minister relates, "The Meritorious One, the Teacher, who is the promoter of our long life, who is the basis for a shrine, who is a field of merit, who is the seat of consecration (*abhisekapīṭhikā*), has passed away in complete Nirvana at Kusināra."[433] Meanwhile, in the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa*, the Buddha is variously referred to as "That Svāmidaruvō of mine who dispells the sufferings of the three worlds,"[434] "the refuge for those without refuge" and "the helper to the helpless,"[435] as well as "he who suffers for the suffering of others" and "the maker of joy in hearts."[436] When the narrator and characters praise the Buddha in such ways it is apparent that the audience is also expected to view him as the "Svāmidaruvō," whose wisdom and compassion far exceed their own.

As we will see in the next chapter, a system of ethics can be introduced and inculcated through the crafting of historical narratives that generate emotional effects in a Buddhist audience. Feelings of serene joy, pious

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433 *Thūp* 174-175: *Amhākaṃ āyuvaḍḍhako cetiyaṭṭhānaṃ puññakkhettaṃ abhisekapīṭhikā bhagavā satthā kusinārāyaṃ parinibbuto' ti.*

434 *SThūp* 20: *Tunlova duk duru karana ē māgē svāmidaruvāṇan.*

435 *SThūp* 76: *Aśaraṇayanṭa śaraṇa vū, anāthayanṭa nātha vū.*

436 *SThūp* 185: *Paraduḥkhaduḥkhita. . . hṛdayānandakara.*

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confidence, and gratitude, represented in the characters of the *Thūpavaṃsa*s and replicated in the model reader or listener, are held to have ethically productive effects in arousing wholesome mental states and cultivating a relationship with the Buddha marked by intimacy and dependence. By envisioning a connection between aesthetics and ethics, the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s may view their narratives as instruments that contribute to the moral agency of their respective audiences. The recalling of historical acts performed by the Buddha, Bodhisattva, and other virtuous beings with highly ornate and figurative language is designed to produce emotional effects in an audience similar to those depicted among the characters in the narratives themselves. Hence the reader or listener is expected to feel joy and gratitude for that which was done by beings in the past that allows him or her to confidently pursue happy rebirths, heavenly pleasures, and even Nirvana. In other words, the emotional effects of reading or hearing about incredible events in the past produce an individual who feels grateful towards and enabled by the actions of others. Thus, in an encounter with the *Thūpavaṃsa*s, one is made to feel taken care of and, in some sense, dependent upon the Buddha and his Dispensation for happiness now and in the future. By prefiguring emotional responses to their narratives,the *Thūpavaṃsa*s construct moral agents who are moved to act in accordance with feelings of serene joy, pious confidence, and gratitude.

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CHAPTER FIVE

ETHICS AND THE PRACTICE OF HISTORY

In the course of this study of Buddhist history-writing in the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s, we have shifted our focus from the production of historical texts to what these historical texts produce. We began by examining the material production of history in the form of textual composition. We argued that in order to begin to understand Buddhist history-writing in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in Sri Lanka, we must consider the manners of writing, reading, and glossing manuscripts, as well as the choices entailed when working with varying and often incoherent written sources. Next we considered how the narratives of these texts employ rhetoric with the aim of producing accomplished readers who will cooperate, more or less, in filling in the gaps of the texts to actualize their potential meanings and effects. And in the previous chapter we described how the *Thūpavaṃsa*s make use of aesthetic forms to produce emotions that implicate the audience in a relationship marked by serene joy and gratitude toward the Buddha and others who have acted for their benefit in the past. The present chapter is also concerned with what these texts produce, but the emphasis here will be given to the ethical and practical fruits that the *Thūpavaṃsa*s are presumed to yield in the world external to them. In other words, the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s assume that by transforming the way individuals feel and think through their narratives, they can also effect ethical transformations that resonate beyond the abstract conceptualization of model readers and listeners to condition actual religious practices.

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V.1 *PŪJĀ* IN TEXT AND PRACTICE

Our study of the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s calls into question the dichotomy commonly posited to exist between texts and practices in the study of religion. As of late, the traditional emphasis on studying the written word over ritual practice has frequently been acknowledged as an important shortcoming in the development of Religious Studies. Rather than choosing merely to redirect attention away from myth and over to ritual, however, I prefer to begin reconceptualizing the relationship between what people write and what people do, inquiring whether or not there is a reciprocity where we have generally conceived a dichotomy. In order for us to recognize what the *Thūpavaṃsa*s were implicitly assumed to produce in the world, we are required to look at these texts as something more than just a record of the past that is meant to teach lessons by examples. With reference to the influential work of Clifford Geertz, we might suggest that it has been commonplace in Religious Studies to view texts as a "model of" and "model for" religion as it functions in a cultural system.[437] That is to say, texts are normally thought of as both representative and prescriptive, describing the world in which people live and telling them how to act within it.

Such a conception of texts, however, inherently assigns them to a position in culture that is once-removed from the reality of human existence. Models, after all, are essentially templates that can represent the way something is or should be, but nevertheless they remain replicas of the real thing and are only the tools for people to put into practice. From this perspective, texts are

[437] Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), pp. 93-94, 123.

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chiefly written instruments that influence culture and religion through compulsion and power wielded by a literary elite seeking to impose the models of their texts upon society. The reduction of texts to the status of inert "models," something which is ironically quite at odds with Geertz's analysis, has made it more difficult for contemporary scholars to see the *vaṃsa*s as anything but historical charters that supposedly legitimate ideologies associated with statecraft, Buddhist monasticism, and/or group consciousness.[438] Although we may be used to seeing texts only as instruments, it is important to note the medieval Sri Lankan authors of Buddhist histories display a rather different conception of texts altogether. The Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s are presented as works that are transformative, and thus they are granted the agency to produce effects in the world themselves. Put differently, these texts make their influence felt through rhetorical and aesthetic uses of language that serve to persuade and attract readers and listeners . Thus, instead of seeing the medieval *vaṃsa*s as the expressions of some vaguely defined, preexisting cultural system, we would do better to take the hints found in these texts and maintain that they were envisioned to generate emotions that condition a moral subjectivity—that is, the manner in which people understand themselves as moral beings in relation to others. Those emotions and that moral subjectivity together give rise to ritual practices. By reversing the equation and viewing

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[438] Geertz, in *The Interpretation of Cultures*, is actually prepared to recognize that religious symbols and symbol systems can shape the world directly by inducing certain dispositions in people towards experiencing certain kinds of feelings and the performance of certain kinds of actions (pp. 94-97). More recently, in his study of the theatre state in Bali, Geertz's suggestion that the rites of state function both to represent reality and create it anew attributes cultural symbols, religious and otherwise, with a transformative capacity that the term "model" sells short. See his *Negara: The Theatre State in Nineteenth-Century Bali* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980).

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texts as productive of culture, we are enabled to read the Buddhist *vaṃsa*s differently and account for the ethical visions of the texts that until now have been largely overlooked.

Therefore, in so far as the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s display the concern to effect morally productive emotions and subjectivities in their audiences, it would be inaccurate to view these texts simply as either the "model of" or "model for" Buddhist ethics in the narrow sense of either a photo or a blueprint. The medieval *vaṃsa*s in general do more than simply represent what Buddhists did and ought to do. On the contrary, we may think of these texts as both enabling and compelling persons to engage in religious acts that promise to yield benefits in this life and in subsequent lifetimes. While the *Thūpavaṃsa*s unquestionably depict the ideal Buddhist agent and the ideal Buddhist society, our examination of the rhetoric and aesthetics of their narratives has revealed the presumption that literature makes the realization of these ideals possible. Put differently, the narratives of the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s create the conditions for ethical practice, so that the ideal Buddhist agent is "made," in effect, by the texts themselves. Moral agency in an audience is accomplished through the generation of views and emotions that bring a person into a relationship of dependence and obligation to others. If conceiving texts as cultural models implies that they are only the "stuff" of practice, representing what the world is like and how one should act in it, we need to rethink the relation between text and practice. It is quite possible, for example, that the ideal Buddhist agent of the *Thūpavaṃsa*s is conceived to be a "patient," for whom

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emotions matter as much reason, and whose practice is dependent upon what others have done.

Indeed, the medieval *vaṃsa*s typically present themselves as being productive of moral acts, generating the ethical conditions that make certain practices both desireable and necessary. The emotions and angle of vision supplied by the narratives of the *Thūpavaṃsa*s creates a moral subjectivity that carries ethical obligations for the reader or listener. To know history is to thus become situated in a condition wherein both action and inaction entail significant moral ramifications for one's life. The texts themselves clearly illustrate the inescapability of this ethical choice when they narrate the account where King Ajātaśatru brings back a portion of the Buddha's relics to Rājagaha. Out of piety, the king has the chariot stopped repeatedly every few feet in order that he and his subjects can make offerings of flowers to the relics:

> When they were bringing the relics with offerings like this, thinking that heretics who do not have pious confidence were distressed by the thought that, 'Beginning from the place where the venerable ascetic Gautama passed away in complete Nirvana, this king said 'Make offerings to the relics' by force. Therefore we have become oppressed. Not being able to do our many tasks, we will be destroyed,' the *arahants*, having concluded that ninety-six crores of persons will be born in hell, thought thus, 'Many persons, having had their minds distressed, will be born in hell. Seeing Sak the king of the gods, a means will be employed by us to take the relics away.[439]

It is telling that the *arahants* do not try to make the nonbelievers venerate the relics. Having concluded that they are reluctant to make offerings and are

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439 *SThūp* 81: *Me lesa pūjāyen dhātu vaḍāgena yana kalhi sādā̃ nāti mithyādṛṣṭikayō, śramaṇa bhavat gautamayan pirinivan pā̃ tān paṭan mē raja balātkārayen dhātu pūjākarava yi. Esē heyin api pīḍāvaṭa pāminiyamha. Api apagē bohō karmānta koṭa gata nohī naṭumha yi sit kalakiruvā sayānu keḷak denā apāyehi upannāhuya [yi rahatun vahansē dāna mesē sitā vadāḷa sēka]. Apa visin sakdev rajjuruvan dāka dhātūn vahansē genayana upāyak karavanu labumha yi sitā vadāḷa sēka.* Note that the above material in brackets appears in *SThūp*$_2$ 93 and *SThūp*$_4$ 102.

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worrying about doing their work, the *arahants* instead decide to seek advice as to how they can remove their obligation to make offerings. In this way, not making offerings to the Buddha when one knows that one should implies the shirking of one's moral responsibilities. The texts underscore this fact by relating in this instance that ethical inaction leads to a miserable rebirth in a hell realm. Similarly, the narratives of the *Thūpavaṃsa*s function to make people feel obligated to either act upon their gratitude to the Buddha or else recognize that to refuse is to be immoral.

As we have seen, the narratives of the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s create the very emotional and imaginative possibilities to make life imitate literature. The texts place their audiences in the same position as the characters in their plots, recalling and rejoicing over what has been done in the past by the Buddha and other virtuous beings to make the Dispensation available to them. By accepting the perspective of the narratives in these texts, one is conditioned to imagine the Buddha as his or her own Svāmidaruvō who went to extraordinary lengths and suffered extraordinary hardships to make the felicities of worldly happiness, heavenly comfort, and finally even Nirvana attainable. The emotions of serene joy and pious confidence are thus generated in the reader and listener upon realizing that one's needs have been anticipated and taken care of by the Buddha. Thus, while the model readers and listeners are made to think and feel like moral agents such as King Aśoka and King Duṭṭhagāmaṇī, it is also the case that they are expected to feel the same obligation to engage in moral acts. In other words, the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s display a recognition that by transforming the emotions and

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moral subjectivities of their audiences, the readers and listeners will, in turn, be driven to engage in practices that heighten their ethical understanding of what their relationship to the Buddha requires of them.

The ethical transformation effected by the *Thūpavaṃsa*s is thus not only a subjective one wherein certain dispositions of feeling and habits of thought are produced, but it is also a physical one in that it brings about the performance of practices similar to those depicted in the texts. In short, these *vaṃsa*s display the expectation that their narratives create effects outside the text that influence the way people think, feel, and act. Indeed, Theravāda thought has traditionally held action to be the natural expression of one's dispositions or intentions.[440] Since the *Thūpavaṃsa*s, as literatery works, manifest the self-recognition that they possess the power to produce emotional dispositions in an audience, it follows that they would have been expected to give rise to corresponding actions. In this way, to see oneself as the beneficiary of history and to feel serene joy and gratitude for that fact instills dispositions and entails an obligation to respond with devotional acts of veneration (*pūjā*) that are morally wholesome (*kusala*) and that acknowledge one's relationship of dependence upon the Buddha who has passed away, but whose former deeds continue to have beneficial effects. Realizing and accepting such an obligation, in turn, gives rise to an ethical awareness of one's relationship to others, that is to say, a moral subjectivity that patterns how one sees oneself and one's responsibilities. The conditions for ethical agency that are generated by the *Thūpavaṃsa*s are

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[440] Ninian Smart, "Action and Suffering in the Theravadin Tradition," *Philosophy East and West* 34, no. 4 (Oct. 1984), pp. 373-374. Smart's argument correctly underlines the importance of dispositions in Theravāda Buddhism as determinative factors of the moral quality of one's actions.

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therefore realized by the arousal of emotions and the acceptance of a vision in which one is dependent upon the superior virtues and attainments of the Buddha who, in turn, has laid out teachings to be learned and practices to be taken up. From the perspective of the *Thūpavaṃsa*s, then, progress along the religious path has been made possible by what the Buddha and, to a lesser extent, other virtuous beings have done in the past.

The Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s show us that history itself is an ethical endeavor since its narratives are designed to give rise to ethically productive emotions and habits of thought that inspire acts of veneration done in gratitude and out of obligation. The narratives of Buddhist history are thus a means for making people into effective moral agents. Certain practices, most notably *pūjā*, are in this way presumed and depicted to be the direct result of encounters with the historical narratives. A person transformed by Buddhist history enacts the gratitude and obligation that he or she is made to feel by engaging in practices that are expressive of the relationships in which one finds oneself as a result of encountering the *Thūpavaṃsa*s. Having become a *satpuruṣa*, as envisioned by the texts, such a virtuous person is instilled with ways of thinking and feeling that lay the foundations for acting in accordance with the ethical visions of their narratives. The connection between narrative and practice can be seen, for example, in the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa*'s direct appeal to the audience following the episode describing the prosperity enjoyed by a female deity who formerly worked for wages as a human at the Mahāthūpa: "Therefore when such prosperity is obtained by merely having aroused serene joy in one's mind with regard to the Fully Awakened Buddha,

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who is my Svāmidaruvō, let offerings (*pūjāva*) be made to this Ruvanmāli Dāgāba diligently by knowledgeable *satpuruṣa*s at all times."[441] Like the deity who feels grateful for what she has obtained, the audience of this text is expected to be similarly moved to make offerings in veneration. Thus, as a mimetic enterprise, Buddhist history is presented as making an audience engage in essentially the same acts of *pūjā* that it depicts being performed by the characters in its narratives.

One of the results of this vision of textual agency in the *Thūpavaṃsa*s is that we may be required to expand our usual notion of what constitutes Buddhist practice. Ritual worship is in other words not so much simply reflected or encouraged in historical texts as it is enabled and provoked by them. In this sense there can be no absolute distinction drawn between a text and a practice, since Buddhist histories are seen to have practical effects that move beyond the written boundaries of their narratives and outside into the world. Thus conceived, Buddhist agents enact devotional practices that are conditioned by the emotional dispositions generated in reading or listening to a *vaṃsa*. It is important to note however that this blurring of the lines demarcating text and practice in the study of religion is not the same thing as interpreting practices as texts to be "read." As Catherine Bell has pointed out, to see rituals as performances that can be *read like a text* reflects a problematic assumption that they are discrete manifestations of more general cultural systems that take place to communicate information to an audience, and more specifically, a scientific

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441 *SThūp* 162: *Esē heyin māgē svāmidaru vū samyak sambudurajāṇan kerehi sita pāhāda vū pamaṇakin me baňdu sampat labana kala, nuvaṇātī satpuruṣayan visin hāma vēlehi no pamāva mē ruvanmāli dāgap pūjāva kaḷa mānavi*. The full translation of this quotation appears above in chapter four, section two.

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observer empowered to "read" the practices of rituals like a text to be interpreted.[442] In our study of the *Thūpavaṃsas*, *pūjā* is conditioned by the texts so that the performance and the motivations behind it arise out of encounters with the texts themselves. Ritual *pūjā*, then, is less a text to be read for expressing general cultural truths in medieval Sri Lanka, than the outward expression of the emotional experiences and moral obligations generated from within the *Thūpavaṃsas* themselves.

Practices of *pūjā* honoring the Triple Gem with offerings of flowers, incense, music, singing, and other symbolic gestures are depicted by our texts as the results of being transformed by learning what was done in the past and rejoicing in it. The word "*pūjā* " connotes an offering made to the Buddha's Dispensation externalized in the form of physical gestures of veneration (e.g., bowing or raising one's hands folded together in the *añjali* gesture) or as a symbolic gift left at a *dāgāba* containing the relics of the Buddha or another enlightened being, a Bodhi Tree associated with the Buddha, or an image of the Buddha.[443] The popularity of making offerings and showing reverence to the Triple Gem has a long history that continues up to the present day in Sri Lanka, as well as in Buddhist communities in other lands. Modern scholars, however, have pointed out an ambivalence found within Theravāda Buddhist literature

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442 Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 39-45. Herein, Bell rightly cautions us that interpretations of rituals as performances tends to devalue the action itself and what it may mean to those involved in favor of latent meanings that they are supposed to represent culturally.

443 Karunatillake, "The Religiousness of Buddhists in Sri Lanka through Belief and Practice," pp. 23, 27. These three locations for *pūjā*, shrine, Bodhi Tree, and image, correspond with a threefold division of relics—*sarīrika* or "bodily" relics, *pāribhogika* or "objects used" by the Buddha, and *uddesika* or "commemorative objects" resembling the Buddha.

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over the practice of relic worship. Trainor has reviewed this debate over whether the cult of relics represents a decline from original ideals of detachment or was in fact an early feature of religious practice among monastics and laypersons alike. He notes that an earlier generation of scholars have cited the Buddha's admonishment to Ānanda for monks not to concern themselves with *sarīra-pūjā* appearing in the *Mahāparinibbāṇa Sutta* and its commentary, which questions the utility of veneration for sustaining the Dispensation, as evidence that monks were originally discouraged from engaging in acts of *pūjā*.[444] Still, citing other texts such as *Milindapañha* and *Kathāvatthu*, as well as the inscriptional evidence of donations by monks and nuns to the *stūpas* at Sāñcī and Bhārhūt recorded by Gregory Schopen, Trainor notes other views that seem to acknowledge relic veneration as fully consonant with the behavior of even the most highly accomplished members of the monastic order.[445]

The question over the historical legitimacy of worshipping relics is a difficult one to answer. This is true in part due to the hopelessly evasive image of Buddhism during the Buddha's life that scholars have long tried to reconstruct. In general, those who identify Buddhism most with the meditative quest of a spiritual virtuoso, an image culled from canonical Pāli texts such as

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444 Trainor, *Relics, Ritual, and Representation in Buddhism*, pp. 51-53.

445 Trainor, *Relics, Ritual, and Representation in Buddhism*, pp. 54-62. It should be added that Gregory Schopen has also raised questions about the supposedly "acultic" character of early Buddhist monasticism gleaned from the *Mahāparinibbāṇa Sutta*. According to him, the lack of a precise definition for the term "*sarīra-pūjā*" has led earlier scholars to conflate the two distinct phenomena of funeral ceremonies and relic veneration, and further to conclude that this discourse contains an injunction for monks not to worship relics. But Schopen argues, based on grammatical evidence and comparisons to other texts, that "*sarīra-pūjā*" really refers to the funeral rites due to the Buddha after his death. See Schopen, "Monks and the Relic Cult in the *Mahāparinibbāna-sutta*: An Old Misunderstanding in regard to Monastic Buddhism," in his *Bones, Stones, and Buddhist Monks: Collected Papers on the Archaeology, Epigraphy, and Texts of Monastic Buddhism in India*, (Honolulu: The University of Hawai'i Press, 1997): 99-113.

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the *Theragāthā* and *Therīgāthā* that emphasize solitary figures striving for and attaining Nirvana, are prone to be somewhat dismissive of the practice of *pūjā*. Walpola Rahula echoes such a view by maintaining that external rites and ceremonies are "inessential" to the Buddhist "way of life" —which is defined doctrinally by the Noble Eightfold Path—and only serve as useful devices to satisfy the emotions and needs of those who are "less advanced intellectually and spiritually" and to help them along the path.[446] Rahula therefore links the historical development of religious ceremonies, presumably including their common feature of *pūjā*, with a later concession that had to be made for the laity to allow them to express their sentiments without fully understanding the subtleties of Buddhist thought.[447] In short, for Rahula and many other modern scholars, *pūjā* is confined to the emotional sphere of Buddhism and reserved for agents with lesser capacities for more advanced ethical and meditative practices.

Moreover the "Buddhist modernists" or "Protestant Buddhists" of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries in Sri Lanka are thought to have similarly adopted a view wherein *pūjā* is an inferior and unnecessary part of their religion. The "modernizing" influences of Post-Enlightenment rationalism and puritanical bourgeois ethics that were propagated under the British colonialists in Sri Lanka have been discussed at length by many scholars as the causes of

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446 Walpola Rahula, *What the Buddha Taught*, rev. ed. (New York: Grove Press, 1974), pp. 80-81. Nancy Auer Falk has similarly noted that for conservative Buddhist schools like Theravāda, *pūjā* was deemed to be of value only as an elementary aspect of self-discipline, helping the laity to recall the Buddha's virtues and example. See her article, "Pūjā," in volume 12 of *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, edited by Mircea Eliade (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1987), p. 86.

447 Walpola Rahula, *History of Buddhism in Ceylon: The Anuradhapura Period, 3rd Century BC-10th Century AC* (1956; reprint, Dehiwala, Sri Lanka: Buddhist Cultural Centre, 1993), pp. 266-267.

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numerous modern developments in Sri Lankan Buddhism.[448] These include a movement somewhat misleadingly termed "Protestant Buddhism," which reconceptualized Buddhism along increasingly more rational and individualistic lines. In brief, the reformism that sought to defend Buddhism from the critical attacks of Christian missionaries eventually found success when its proponents maintained that their religion was *more* rational and amenable to scientific inquiry than Christianity could claim to be. In such an atmosphere, greater stress was laid upon meditation and doctrines than worship as essential characteristics of the religion. The salient features of a Buddhism thus transformed has been succinctly described by Obeyesekere and Gombrich in comparison to similar features attributed to Protestant Christianity: "Religion is privatized and internalized: the truly significant is not what takes place at a public celebration or in ritual, but what happens inside one's own mind or soul."[449] From this perspective, Buddhist ethics entails self-discipline and mental development, and *pūjā* is at best an inessential means through which ordinary people might eventually come to embrace a more advanced and ethical way of life.

The degree to which "Protestant Buddhism," as represented above, has been embraced by all sections of the Sinhala Buddhist community is still very much in question. Somewhat ironically, this particular type of ideology has

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[448] See, for example, Heinz Bechert, *Buddhismus, Staat und Gesellschaft in den Ländern des Theravāda-Buddhismus*, 3 vols., (Frankfurt-on-Main: Alfred Metzner Verlag, 1966-1973), George D. Bond, *The Buddhist Revival in Sri Lanka: Religious Tradition, Reinterpretation and Response*, (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1988), Kitsiri Malalgoda, *Buddhism in Sinhalese Society, 1750-1900*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1976); Obeyesekere and Gombrich, *Buddhism Transformed.*

[449] Obeyesekere and Gombrich, *Buddhism Transformed*, p. 216.

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perhaps been most pervasive at the level of encouraging public, collective displays of Buddhist piety such as street processions (Sinh: *perahara*) and campaigns to administer the Buddhist precepts (Sinh: *sil*) to the laity.[450] Furthermore, the fact remains that *pūjā* persists as a conspicuously popular practice among the vast majority of Sri Lankan Buddhists today. Yet it is still fair to say that, in general, many modern western and Sri Lankan scholars alike have tended to see *pūjā* as an activity that lies outside the realm of Buddhist ethics properly defined. Moreover, the analogous example of offerings that are made to Hindu deities only deepens the suspicions among scholars that *pūjā* is more of a cultural accretion than a valid and necessary aspect of the Buddhist religion per se.[451]

In contrast to this line of thinking, I contend that the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s reveal how *pūjā* was integrated into a system of ethics through the narration of history in medieval Sri Lanka. Scholars who wish to argue over the legitimacy of relic worship with respect to "early" or "original" Buddhism, are of course free to do so.[452] Our study, however, considers why *pūjā* is a subject of so much interest in the *vaṃsakathā* of Sri Lanka and the ways in which it assumes an ethical importance. We have already noted how

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450 Jonathan Spencer, *A Sinhala Village in a Time of Trouble: Politics and Change in Rural Sri Lanka* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 68-70.

451 Unlike the case in Buddhist Studes, there is no shortage of works dealing with Hindu *pūjā*. See, for example, C. J. Fuller, *The Camphor Flame: Popular Hinduism and Society in India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992).

452 Donald S Lopez, Jr. has been one of the more eloquent critics of attempts by scholars to reconstruct an accurate picture of early Buddhism. In his introduction to the volume entitled *Buddhism in Practice* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), he has argued that due to the uncertainty surrounding which *sutta*s can legitimately be traced to the Buddha, it is extremely difficult , if not impossible, to recover the Buddha's original teachings (p. 4). See also the remarks in his "Foreigner at the Lama's Feet," in *Curators of the Buddha: The Study of Buddhism Under Colonialism*, Donald S. Lopez, Jr, ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), pp. 251-261.

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encounters with these texts are designed to generate emotional responses that resemble the desired experiences of persons engaging in Buddhist rituals of doing merit.[453] Emotions of serene joy, pious confidence, and gratitude are thus viewed as productive of *pūjā*, which itself situates a person in a relationship of reverence to the Triple Gem while also promising to yield merit for one's soteriological benefit. In the *Thūpavaṃsa*s, *pūjā* is portrayed specifically as an act that displays one's gratitude and obligation towards the Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha. As such, *pūjā* appears to have assumed an important role in the ethical development of medieval Sri Lankan Buddhists. Devotionalism, as represented in these texts, resonates well with the production of a specific moral subjectivity founded upon gratitude and obligation toward the Buddha. The virtuous person represented in and created by the *vaṃsa*s is at once shown and expected to engage in acts of *pūjā*. At the same time, moreover, *pūjā* appears to enlarge an individual's capacity to be ethical, as this practice confirms one's dependent relationship with the Buddha and is explicitly linked to the attainments of happiness, heaven, and release in the texts.

We might therefore submit that the authors of historical narratives in medieval Sri Lanka took devotional *pūjā* to be neither inconsistent with nor inimical to Buddhist moral practice. Rather, *pūjā* is consistently depicted as a practice that all virtuous beings do, and also one that leads to the attainment of beneficial karmic fruits for the person who does it. More specifically, we might reasonably take *pūjā* to represent the outward expression of gratitude that one feels towards the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha for making it possible

[453] Karunatillake, "The Religiousness of Buddhists in Sri Lanka through Belief and Practice," pp. 22-23.

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for beings in later ages to alleviate and eventually be released from the suffering of existence in *saṃsāra*. Again, the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s may be said to be mimetic of themselves, since the characters who perform *pūjā* and reap the fruits of such action in the texts do so in large part after either having recalled what has been done in the past or having witnessed evidence of the astonishing accomplishments of the Buddha and other virtuous beings. In this sense, the *dāgāba*s that enshrine the bodily relics of the Buddha testify to what he has done for the benefit and happiness of the world that has come after him. And thus far from being extraneous to a Buddhist "way of life" that leads toward Nirvana, doing *pūjā* is shown to play an integral role in the ethical development of virtuous persons.

V.2 FROM MODEL READER TO *SATPURUṢA*

We have already seen that the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s explicitly envision their audience as a group of *satpuruṣa*s, or "virtuous persons," who are imagined to receive the narrative and respond to it in kind as pious Buddhists. In chapter three, we noted the similarities that such a conception shares with what literary theorists have called the "model" or "implied" reader of a text. The model reader (or listener) is in some sense an idealized and abstract concept, a figure expected to cooperate in the process of actualizing the potential meaning of a text at the time of its composition. As such, many of the theorists that we have mentioned make a distinction between model readers and the "real" or "empirical" readers who encounter a text and are liable to disobey the rhetorical devices encoded in the narrative to make them interpret a text in

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the way that is either intended by the author or simply prefigured in the text itself. In other words, the inevitable gaps in a narrative description are left for the reader or listener to fill in, and it is expected that they will pick up the hints and interpret the narrative in a way that is sensible and consonant with the story as a whole.[454] Still, some literary theorists such as Eco acknowledge that texts are susceptible to alternative and conflicting readings in spite of their rhetoric which functions to make some readings more likely and desirable than others:

> The model reader of a story is not the empirical reader. The empirical reader is you, me, anyone, when we read a text. Empirical readers can read in many ways, and there is no law that tells them how to read, because they often use the text as a container for their own passions, which may come from outside the text or which the text may arouse by chance.[455]

The empirical or real reader is thus conceived by Eco as a somewhat unpredictable partner in the production of meaning in a text. But the acceptance of the role of the model reader/listener is generally held to be necessary for the elementary comprehension of the narrative as it is written.[456]

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[454] See, for example, Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, p. 28; and Eco, *Six Walks in the Fictional Woods*, p. 3.

[455] Eco, *Six Walks in the Fictional Woods*, p. 8. Similarly, Eco has elsewhere discussed the practice he calls "ideological overcoding," whereby an empirical reader superimposes his or her own perspective upon a text and eclipsing the codes that the text itself presents to guide the reader:

> Finally, an ideological bias can lead a critical reader to make a given text say more than it apparently says, that is, to find out what in that text is ideologically presupposed, untold. In this movement from the ideological subcodes of the interpreter to the ideological subcodes tentatively attributed to the author. . . even the most closed texts are surgically 'opened': fiction is transformed into document and the innocence of fancy is translated into the disturbing evidence of a philosophical statement [Eco, *The Role of the Reader*, p. 22].

Therein, Eco is of course not making a reactionary defense for the possibility of non-ideological discourse, but he is drawing attention to the fact that it is possible for a reader to disobey, as it were, the clues dropped and the structure given in a text designed to ensure a specific reading and interpretation.

[456] Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, pp. 149-151.

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Other literary theorists conceive of the model reader in essentially the same way, but posit a closer relationship between an "implied" and a "real" reader. While Eco and Seymour Chatman raise doubts over the real reader's competency to take the hints presented to the model or implied reader in the narrative structure of texts, Wolfgang Iser advances a more phenomenological interpretation that attributes the task of making meaning out of texts to the experiences and creativity of real readers more directly. Iser's "implied reader" is charged with the responsibility of employing his or her own imagination to synthesize and add to the material in a narrative. According to him, text and reader combine to realize the work of a text, as the reader interprets and supplements the incomplete narrative outlines that are suggested in the text.[457] The shift away from the rhetorical mechanics of the text towards the imaginative abilities of the reader has the effect of conflating implied and real readers who respond to the material at hand. Thus, Iser notes that while the meaning is guided by the formal structure of the text, it must still be ideationally produced in the mind of the reader in accordance with one's imagination and store of experiences through which one can visualize and follow the sequence of events in the narrative.[458]

We might then understand Iser to argue that the implied reader of any narrative is only known through the act of reading by a real reader. It is at this point that the differences between himself and theorists like Eco and Chatman become clearer. These differences, however, are largely only of focus and

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457 Iser, *The Implied Reader*, pp. 274-276.

458 Iser, *The Act of Reading*, pp. 34-38.

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emphasis, as all of them recognize that narrative texts presuppose and are addressed to a reader, and thus are composed with various "codes" or "rhetorical signposts" to guide a meaningful interpretation of them. In other words, all the above theorists would agree that narrative texts possess some notion of a model reader that is prefigured in their structures. Eco and Chatman, however, are largely reluctant to analyze the model reader beyond the set of textual instructions to guide the reading of a narrative.[459] Their studies are devoted to examining the rhetoric and semiotics of texts, or that which guides a reader in the act of interpretation. Iser, on the other hand, is more concerned with describing the experience of reading and how meaning is generated from a text. According to him, meaning is not formulated in a text itself, but it is actualized and arises out of the interaction between structure and reader in an "intersubjective frame of reference," combining both subjective and objective modes of interpretation.[460] As such, Iser is equally concerned with what the reader brings with him or her in the act of reading and interpreting a text.

It should be obvious by now that we have made use of both theoretical perspectives in our focus on both the rhetoric of Buddhist history and the aesthetic effects conceived to take place in an encounter with such a text. Clearly, the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s employ various rhetorical and aesthetic techniques in an effort to condition how they will be received by their audiences. Yet they also display the expectation that their narratives will give

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[459] In comparing his position with that of Iser, Eco acknowledges that he grants the reader less freedom to determine the meaning of a text. Moreover, he is content to focus on the "fictitious reader," which a real, empirical reader must to some degree figure out in the process of interpreting a text. See his *Six Walks in the Fictional Woods*, pp. 15-16.

[460] Iser, *The Act of Reading*, pp. 18-25.

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rise to emotional dispositions and moral obligations, transforming their readers and listeners into moral agents who will act in accordance with the depiction of history and the world presented within. Iser himself notes that in the act of reading and creating images out of a text, the reader mometarily withdraws from the real world into the world that he or she creates jointly with the text.[461] Then, when the reader returns to the real world, having been taken outside of what is strictly one's own experience, he or see is enabled to see the world differently.[462] In the transformation of a reader according to Iser, however, the reader plays a large role in transforming him or herself. The reader's own imagination works on the text as much as the text does work on the reader. In contrast, our analysis of the *Thūpavaṃsa*s reveals that these texts assume a greater capacity to act upon and transform their audiences. There remains, to be sure, a fictive quality to their narratives that leaves many details and explanations to the imagination of their Buddhist audiences. Yet there is little room to avoid coming to the desired conclusions put forth in the texts. As the beneficiary of history, one ought to feel grateful and obligated. The transformation of the reader or listener is therefore envisioned to be more complete than merely looking at the world through different eyes, so to speak. Not only are one's viewpoints expected and conditioned to change, but one's feelings and behavior is transformed as well.

The model readers and listeners of Buddhist history are those "*satpuruṣas*" who are described as listening attentively to the narratives of the

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461 Iser, *The Act of Reading*, p. 140.

462 Iser, *The Act of Reading*, p. 152.

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vaṃsas. As we have seen above, many of the medieval Buddhist histories from Sri Lanka, in both Pāli and Sinhala, explicitly acknowledge their audiences as "virtuous persons." In this way, texts such as the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsas* depict and prefigure their model readers and listeners in terms of an ethically conceived category, which itself signals the kind of transformation that is presumed to take place in their audiences. That is to say, these *vaṃsas* display an expectation that they make their readers and listeners more "virtuous," that is—ethical, than they were before. These texts thus appear to reflect a somewhat different understanding of the relationship between model and real readers than what is found in the structural and phenomenological theories discussed above. In highlighting the aesthetic effects of historical as well as fictional narrative, Paul Ricoeur has helpfully noted that the model reader is actualized in the real reader, as the text works to transform those "flesh-and-blood" readers in accordance with and mediated by the expectations contained within its narrative.[463] Consequently, we might wish to ask Iser whether it is possible for an individual to have expectations and imagination that exist freely apart from a narrative. Can a "real reader" bring anything to a text in the process of interpretation that has not in some degree already been shaped or stimulated by the text itself? While Iser's reader appears somewhat unmalleable and able to make the text fit his or her own unique vision, Ricouer instead suggests that readers (and presumably also listeners) are radically changed by their encounters with narratives. The *Thūpavaṃsas*, as well as many other Sri Lankan *vaṃsas*, present themselves as having the latter kind of

[463] Paul Ricouer, *Time and Narrative*, vol. 3, translated by Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1988), pp. 166-172.

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effect on their audiences. Ultimately, the readers and listeners who are implied by the narratives of Buddhist history are presumed, at least, to coincide with those who encounter a text and are transformed by it.

The issue of agency in the *Thūpavaṃsa*s thus ought to be located more within the sphere of the texts themselves than in persons who might otherwise be thought to enact willfully the models or structures encountered in the narratives. Like the characters in their narratives who experience ethically productive feelings and engage in morally beneficial acts as a result of recalling the virtues and attainments of the Triple Gem, the "real" readers and listeners are expected and conditioned to respond to these same narratives in an analogous way. That is to say, the audiences of Buddhist histories are assumed to feel serene joy when learning what the Buddha has done to enable them to attain worldly and transcendent happiness, and the gratitude that should come when one realizes that one's needs have been anticipated and met also obliges one to express this gratitude in acts of *pūjā*. Hence, in as much as the *Thūpavaṃsa*s are directed towards eliciting morally productive emotional and ethical responses in their audiences, the "real" readers and listeners become the *satpuruṣa*s implied in the texts. By addressing their model readers and listeners as "*satpuruṣa*s," the *Thūpavaṃsa*s display not so much a belief that their audiences are already virtuous as the expectation that they will be made virtuous by their narratives. When used in the invocations or the benedictions of historical narrative, the term "*satpuruṣa*" connotes a person who encounters the text and is thereby transformed.

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The *satpuruṣa*, then, is something more than the abstract concept of the model reader who is prefigured by the structure of a text according to literary theory. Rather, Buddhist history-writing in medieval Sri Lanka equates the model reader or listener with the real, "flesh-and-blood" person transformed by the narrative of the text. Again, this transformation is fundamentally an ethical one, since the text presents itself as generating morally productive emotions and awarenesses that implicate the reader or listener in a position of dependence and obligation to the Triple Gem. While the rhetorical language of the *Thūpavaṃsa*s works to create good readers and listeners who are made aware of their relationship to what was done in the past, and the aesthetics of the *Thūpavaṃsa*s work to create emotions that involve them subjectively in this relationship, these two aspects together enable their narratives to give rise to acts such as *pūjā* that are performed external to the texts. In other words, Buddhist histories like the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s work to bring something new into the world, reconstructing a narrative of the past that in turn gives rise to virtuous persons and the physical performance of ritualized veneration.[464]

The *satpuruṣa* as an ethically aware agent implied and transformed by the text is thus a person who is made to adopt the historical consciousness imparted by the narrative of the *Thūpavaṃsa*s. Recalling what the Buddha has done and how he has anticipated one's needs, in turn, results in the formation of an agent who feels gratitiude for having been cared for in prior, historical events. Furthermore, the recollection of Buddhist history carries with it the corresponding impetus to engage in devotional acts. A person is thus thought

[464] On the productive "work" of historical texts that transforms readers who engage in the act of reading historical narratives, see LaCapra, *Rethinking Intellectual History*, p. 30.

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to be cognitively, affectively, and behaviorally transformed by an encounter with Buddhist historical narratives that were "recited for the sake of arousing serene joy in the minds of *satpuruṣas*."[465] Generally speaking, a *satpuruṣa* is a person who, regardless of one's past actions and inclinations, has been enabled and impelled by history to see oneself as the beneficiary of the past and to act in a correspondingly moral manner. In this sense, then, one's moral agency and capacity to make progress along the path leading towards desired Buddhist felicities is bestowed by the *Thūpavaṃsa*s in their recalling of what the Buddha and other virtuous beings have done in the past. Conditioned by ethically productive thoughts and feelings, the *satpuruṣa* is depicted in our texts as having no other choice but to do *pūjā*.

Before we look more closely into such representations in the *Thūpavaṃsa*s, it is worthwhile to sketch a rough outline of how the figure of the *satpuruṣa* has traditionally been conceived in the literature of Sri Lankan Buddhism. To begin with, the ideal ethical agent prefigured in the medieval *vaṃsa*s and identified as a "*satpuruṣa*" is more broadly defined in these texts than in the older Pāli Tipiṭaka. The "virtuous person," or *sappurisa*, of the Tipiṭaka is conceptualized with quite distinct characteristics that constrast sharply from the "wicked person," or *asappurisa*. Reading through some of the canonical pronouncements on the *sappurisa*, we find a vision of one who is endowed with moral qualities and praiseworthy conduct. The canonical *sappurisa* is not the model reader of these texts, which after all were orally transmitted at first, but is instead a kind of ethical exemplar described by the

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[465] *SThūp* 189: *Satpuruṣayangē sit pahadavanu piṇisa kiyana lada.* Cf. *Thūp* 163, 247: *Sādhujanamanopasādanatthāya kate.*

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Buddha. Two notable discourses on the "virtuous person" that appear, respectively, in the *Majjhima Nikāya* and *Aṅguttara Nikāya* are framed by similar introductions where the Buddha is quoted as saying, "Monks, I will preach to you about the nature of a virtuous person [*sappurisa*] and about the nature of a wicked person [*asappurisa*]" and also "Monks, I will preach to you about the wicked person, the person more wicked than the wicked person, the virtuous person, and the person more virtuous than the virtuous person."[466] Herein the *sappurisa* is presented as a discursive topic to which his retinue of monks should listen well and keep in mind (*taṃ suṇatha sādhukaṃ manasikarotha*). The listening audience is never addressed as "virtuous persons," and so we may infer that in this instance the Buddha's moral exhortations functioned primarily to construct an ethical model upon which one intentionally patterns his or her life.

Not surprisingly given the monastic audiences mentioned in these canonical discourses, the *sappurisa* appears to resemble not just a "virtuous person," but a virtuous monk in particular. Although, in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, the qualities associated with the *sappurisa* begin as generalizable moral virtues that apply to monastics and the laity alike, as the discourse progresses it becomes clear that this kind of virtuous person undertakes highly advanced

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466 *M* III. 37: *Bhagavā etad avoca: Sappurisadhammañ ca vo, bhikkhave, desissāmi asappurisadhammañ ca.* See also *A* II. 217: *Asappurisañ ca vo bhikkhave desessāmi, asappurisena asappurisataraṅ ca, sappurisañ ca, sappurisena sappurisataraṅ ca.* The commentary on *Aṅguttara Nikāya* provides us with a somewhat more specific definition of of those four moral types: "As for 'wicked person,' it should be understood as the inferior person, the vain person, the infatuated person, one blinded by ignorance, and the fool. As for 'the person more wicked than the wocked person,' it is to be understood as an excessively wicked person. The other two [virtuous persons] ought to be known in the manner opposite of what was said." See *Mp* III. 209: *[A]sappurisan ti lāmakapurisaṃ tucchapurisaṃ muḷhapurisaṃ avijjāya andhīkataṃ bālaṃ. Asappurisataran ti atirekena asappurisaṃ. Itare dve vuttapaṭipakkhavasena veditabbā.*

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meditative practices with the goal of release from *saṃsāra* in mind. Hence we learn that a virtuous person abstains from breaking the Five Precepts against destroying life, stealing, sexual misconduct, false speech, and taking intoxicants; is characterized by the qualities of pious confidence (*saddho*), modesty (*hirimā*), fear of wrong-doing (*ottāpī*), learnedness (*bahussuto*), vigor (*āraddhaviriyo*), and wisdom (*paññavā*); abstains from slanderous, rough, and frivolous speech; is neither covetous nor malicious, but holds right views; and also is said to follow the Noble Eightfold Path.[467] The virtues mentioned here apply more or less to an ethical program directed to all Buddhists. When it comes to defining the person who is more virtuous than the virtuous person, the text repeatedly states that one who not only fulfills these virtues him or herself, but also encourages (*samādapeti*) them in another deserves to be regarded as an even "more virtuous person" (*sappurisataro*).

Yet further investigation into the concept of the *sappurisa* in the canonical Pāli literature appears to depict the "virtuous person" in terms of attributes that are more specifically associated with a monastic audience than with the laity. A short exposition on the qualities of a *sappurisa* in the *Dīgha Nikāya* mentions seven characteristics that are found. "[As for] seven qualities of a virtuous person, friend, herein a monk is a knower of the Dhamma, a knower of the meaning, a knower of oneself, a knower of limits, a knower of the proper time, a knower of assemblies, and a knower of persons."[468] This passage thus appears to describe the *sappurisa* as a monk who is

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467 *A* II. 217-220.

468 *D* III. 252: *Satta sappurisadhammā. Idh' āvuso bhikkhu dhammaññū ca hoti, atthaññū ca, attaññū ca, mattaññū ca, kālaññū ca, parisaññū ca, puggalaññū ca.*

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knowledgeable with regard to the Buddha's teaching, one's own conduct, and how best to preach to others. Furthermore, this text circumscribes the identity of the *sappurisa* even more when it declares that these seven qualities of a *sappurisa* are "difficult to penetrate" (*duppaṭivijjhā*), and therefore are presumably realized in a small number of people.[469]

Similarly, the Sappurisa Sutta in the *Majjhima Nikāya* defines a virtuous person negatively by what he or she is not, and in the process presents a vision of a renunciate who is modest about one's background and one's attainments. The description of the *sappurisa* in this instance reads like an indirect exhortation to monks on what they should strive to achieve:

> And what, monks, is the nature of a virtuous person? Herein monks, [say] a wicked person has gone forth to become a monk from a high family. He thus considers, 'Indeed, I have gone forth to become a monk from a high family. But these other monks have not gone forth to become a monk from a high family.' Because of belonging to a high family, he praises himself and disparages others. This, monks, is the nature of a wicked person. However, monks, a virtuous person thus considers, 'It is not because of belonging to a high family that the conditions of greed become exhausted, the conditions of ill-will become exhausted, or the conditions of delusion become exhausted. Even if one has not gone forth to become a monk from a high family, he may still enter upon the path in conformity to the Dhamma, enter upon the proper path, and possess righteous conduct. Therefore he is honorable and he is praised.' Meanwhile, doing just the path of correct conduct, he does not praise himself or disparage others because of belonging to a high family. This, monks, is the nature of a virtuous person.[470]

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469 *D* III. 283: *Katame satta dhammā duppaṭivijjhā? Satta sappurisadhammā.*

470 *M* III. 37-38: *Katamo ca, bhikkhave, sappurisadhammo? Idha, bhikkhave, asappuriso uccā kulā pabbajito hoti. So iti paṭisañcikkhati: Aham kho 'mhi uccā kulā pabbajito. Ime pan' aññe bhikkhū na uccā kulā pabbajitā ti. So tāya uccākulīnatāya attān' ukkaṁseti paraṃ vambheti. Ayam pi, bhikkhave, asappurisadhammo. Sappuriso ca kho, bhikkhave, iti paṭisañcikkhati: Na kho uccākulīnatāya lobhadhammā vā parikkhayaṃ gacchanti, dosadhammā vā parikkhayaṃ gacchanti, mohadhammā vā parikkhayaṃ gacchanti. No ce pi uccā kulā pabbajito hoti, so ca hoti dhammānudhammapaṭipanno sāmīcipaṭipanno anudhammacārī, so tattha pujjo so tattha pāsaṁso ti. So paṭipadaṃ yeva antaraṃ karitvā tāya uccākulīnatāya n' ev' attān' ukkaṃseti na paraṃ vambheti. Ayaṃ, bhikkhave, sappurisadhammo.*

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The same discourse proceeds to note other such qualities that a monk may or may not possess, but continually emphasizes an awareness that they do not guarantee a virtuous mode of life in conformity to the Dhamma in and of themselves. Thus, among other things, a *sappurisa* also does not praise one's ability to receive the four requisites of a monk, one's learnedness, one's expertise in the *Vinaya*, one's status as a Dhamma-preacher, one's status as a forest-dweller, or one's meditative accomplishments as elevating oneself above others and eliminating one's faults. Clearly in this view, the *sappurisa* is a monk devoted to good conduct and, significantly, not just any monk at that.

Elsewhere, in the Cūḷapuṇṇama Sutta of the *Majjhima Nikāya*, we find another description of the *sappurisa* that resembles much of what we have already encountered above. The virtuous person is categorized both by one's qualities and conduct. For instance, this *sutta* includes the list of the virtuous qualities of a *sappurisa* that is also found in the Aṅguttara Nikāya and is comprised of pious conviction, modesty, fear of wrong-doing, and so forth. A *sappurisa* here also refrains from breaking the Precepts and using harmful and frivolous speech. But this discourse also introduces the idea that the virtuous person associates with other virtuous persons among recluses and *brahmins*, the idea that the virtuous person counsels others not to injure oneself or others, the idea that the virtuous person holds correct views about the fruits of actions, rebirth, and service to one's parents, and the idea that the virtuous person gives pure gifts that have been well-prepared with an understanding of their effects to other virtuous persons.[471] Yet it is significant that in this discourse, the concept

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[471] *M* III. 23-24.

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of the *sappurisa* is depicted in some terms that are not only attributable to monks. This attention given to correct alms-givings, wherein the *sappurisa* is said to give a well-prepared gift (*sakkaccadānaṃ*) that is also pure (*parisuddhaṃ*) with consideration and a view towards its future benefits (*āgamanadiṭṭhiko*), may in fact signal a potential means for the inclusion of the laity in this ethical category.[472] Moreover, this discourse also includes a brief statement on the soteriological results for a *sappurisa* that provides an additional hint as to why this term was apparently expanded to incorporate more people in later Buddhist works. Therein, the Buddha rhetorically asks, "And what, monks, is the future destiny of virtuous persons? It is the greatness of the gods or the greatness of humans."[473] If being a *sappurisa* entails acquiring desired Buddhist felicities, it is quite possible that this term was retained by monks and lay pandits when they preached and wrote about attaining fortunate rebirths as gods or humans to a lay audience.

Unlike the list of specific characteristics that are variously attributed to the virtuous person in the Tipiṭaka, the figure of the *satpuruṣa* in the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s is conceived of and discussed in a broader fashion. We have already noted that the "virtuous person" frequently appears as the model reader or listener who is anticipated to encounter Buddhist histories. From this we might infer that the generalized description of the *satpuruṣa* in several Pāli

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472 Franklin Edgerton has noted that Paul Mus once suggested to him that the *satpuruṣa* is a kind of lay equivalent to the *bodhisattva*. Edgerton evidently agrees with Mus, as he takes this term to be a category of laypeople that appears alongside that of *bodhisattvas* in Mahāyāna Sanskrit literature. See "*satpuruṣa*" in Franklin Edgerton, *Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Gramar and Dictionary*, vol. II, p. 554.

473 *M* III. 24: *Kā ca, bhikkhave, sappurisānaṃ gati? Devamahattatā vā manussamahattatā vā ti.*

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and Sinhala *vaṃsa*s suggests an expansion of the ideal moral agent beyond strictly the monastic realm. Indeed, the direct appeals to the reader/listener and the portrayals of the characters in the *Thūpavaṃsa*s generally emphasize the cultivation of productive emotional states and the performance of meritorious acts over the practice of meditation as a means for release from the world of *saṃsāra*. These texts consistently maintain that virtuous persons are those who experience emotions that condition moral acts that carry soteriological effects. For instance, it is said of King Devānampiyatissa that "having serene joy with regard to the Buddha's Dispensation, he wishes to set up a *thūpa*."[474] The king's moral agency is thus suggested to derive from a generalized religious emotion—that is, *pasāda*, while being expressed through the act of founding Buddhist sites of worship such as the Thūpārāma and the Bodhi Tree. Establishing those relics in this way provides places for remembering and venerating the Buddha. It also makes the Buddha's resolutions to establish those relics in Sri Lanka a reality. In this way, the texts reinforce the idea that emotions can have moral effects by giving rise to the practice of pious acts.

The rough outlines that are drawn for the *satpuruṣa* concept in the *Thūpavaṃsa*s exemplify a revised and enlarged notion of the ideal Buddhist agent who is described in the texts and ultimately seen to be created by them. Rather than prescribing a specific moral code of behavior such as the Noble Eightfold Path, the *Thūpavaṃsa*s deal with ethics in terms of the feelings and obligations that arise out of encounters with historical narratives. Herein lies a subtle and sophisticated approach towards making people good, one that speaks

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474 *Thūp* 197: *Devānampiyatisso buddhasāsane pasanno thūpaṃ patiṭṭhāpetukāmo.*

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to a particularly medieval conception of what Sri Lankan Buddhist literature is empowered to do. The narratives of the *Thūpavaṃsa*s are primarily concerned with showing their readers and listeners that they are the beneficiaries of deeds done in the past by the Buddha and Bodhisattva, venerable monks such as Mahinda, and virtuous kings such as Duṭṭhagāmaṇī. At the same time, they structure and condition a moral life that is based upon feelings and ethical dispositions that are presumed to arise when one realizes his or her needs have been anticipated and taken care of by others. The *satpuruṣa* of the *Thūpavaṃsa*s is therefore not simply an ethical model with a list of clearly discernible characteristics after which one should pattern one's behavior. Instead, the *satpuruṣa* is both prefigured and created by those texts as the reader or listener is transformed into a moral Buddhist agent.

One of the main characteristics of the *satpuruṣa* as portrayed in the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s is that he or she is someone who is historically conscious of what was done in the past, what results in the present, and what can be expected in the future. In short, this entails locating one's own existence in relation to a broader vision of moral agency that incorporates oneself and others within a single temporal frame. Historical narratives may therefore be considered to be a highly effective medium for generating this kind of awareness. Steven Collins has likewise noted that in the Pāli *vaṃsa*s, the passage of both non-repetitive time and repetitive time, in such topics as the succession of kings and the parallels between the twenty-four Buddhas respectively, is a "proximate referent" brought forward in the texts for attention

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and reflection.[475] As "tales about time," Collins argues, the *vaṃsa*s present to us in sharp detail the method by which later Sri Lankan chroniclers mediated a transcendentalist ideology of the Buddha's escape from the world with the mundane presence of his relics in later ages.[476] In this sense, the Buddha maintains both a separation and connection with the world that exists after his *parinirvāṇa*. Moreover, this temporal awareness to which Collins refers carries an important ethical component in the *Thūpavaṃsa*s. Since the texts relate that the Buddha has acted on "our" behalf, we are made to understand that knowing about the past elicits an obligation to express our gratitude with meritorious acts of veneration and making offerings.

The *satpuruṣa* then, in reading or listening to history, becomes implicated in a relationship to the past wherein one's knowledge of and feelings toward the past condition the performance of moral acts that yield soteriological fruits in the present and future. We have already noted an episode in the *Thūpavaṃsa*s where a female deity reflects upon an act of merit she did in the past to attain her present level of divine prosperity. Her remembrance of the past and how she had worshipped the Mahāthūpa with serene joy further conditions her acts of making offerings and venerating the *dāgāba* anew.[477] Similarly, in the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa*, when King Duṭugāmuṇu witnesses

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[475] Collins, *Nirvana and Other Buddhist Felicities*, pp. 254-255.

[476] Collins, *Nirvana and Other Buddhist Felicities*, pp. 280-281. For a discussion of how relic veneration effectively functions as a means to make the Buddha "present" in the world, see Trainor, *Relics, Ritual, and Representation in Buddhism*, pp. 143-163. Also see, Juliane Schober, who discusses how contemporary worship at a Burmese shrine creates the potential for making the Buddha present in Mandalay in her article "In the Presence of the Buddha: Ritual Veneration of the Burmese Mahāmunī Image," in *Sacred Biography in the Buddhist Traditions of South and Southeast Asia*, ed. Juliane Schober (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997): 259-288.

[477] *Thūp* 112, 231; *SThūp* 162.

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various miracles displayed by the *droṇa* of relics at the Mahāthūpa, the narrative describes his reaction when those relics alight upon his head: "At that time that king, being filled with joy like the fine cup of the *tolabō* plant filled with wind, thinking, as if he had arrived at the royal consecration, 'The fruit of my existence has been obtained. I am not a person who has not done merit in former births'."[478] Although the double negative phrasing of this sentence sounds awkward in English, the message is clear. The king undertakes the depositing of the relics in the Mahāthūpa with a sense of dependency on what was done in the past by others—and even himself, so to speak, in former lifetimes.[479]

The role of history in engendering an ethical awareness and the impulse for moral acts in a *satpuruṣa* is clearly illustrated in the *Thūpavaṃsa*s' treatment of various predictions and resolutions made in the past. Many of the notable acts of merit performed by King Aśoka, King Devānaṃpiyatissa, and King Duṭṭhagāmaṇī are framed in the narratives by allusions made to earlier predictions that foresaw such events. We have already noted in brief how the establishment of the right collar-bone relic in the Thūpārāma, the Bodhi Tree in Anurādhapura, and the *droṇa* (P: *doṇa*) of relics in the Mahāthūpa were prophesied by the Buddha upon his *parinirvāṇa*. Hence, for example, the Pāli *Thūpavaṃsa* foretells the coming of the large measure of bodily relics to

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478 *SThūp* 187: *E vēlehi tolabō viteka suḷaṁ purapī kalak men ē raja prītin pinā, abhiṣekayaṭa pāmiṇi kala men, 'Māgē ātmabhāvayehi phala ladimi. Giya jātiyehi pin no kaḷa ekeki mut no vemi' sita sitā.*

479 It should be recalled that earlier in the Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*, eight *arahant*s consoled the king who was fearful that his acts of war would prevent his attaining heaven and release by confirming that King Duṭugāmuṇu fulfilled the perfections throughout one incalculable and one hundred-thousand eons, and that the merit from this ensures a heavenly rebirth for him. See chapter two, section one above for the relevant quote from *SThūp* 141-142.

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Anurādhapura when the elder monks inform the novice Soṇuttara why he should collect the relics from the *nāga* world to be enshrined in the Mahāthūpa in Sri Lanka ("Tambapaṇṇi"):

> The order of monks spoke thus to [the novice], 'Friend! Soṇuttara! When the Tathāgata was lying on the deathbed, addressing Sakka, the king of the gods, he said, 'Out of my bodily relics measuring eight *doṇa*s, one *doṇa* that is honored by the Koḷiya kings will in the future be established in the Great Shrine in the island of Tambapaṇṇi.'[480]

This prediction must in turn be read in the light of the Buddha's resolution to have his relics dispersed and *thūpa*s built for people to worship and aspire towards rebirth in a heavenly realm.[481] Again, out of compassion for the world, the Buddha is depicted as having availed his relics to the beings in Sri Lanka. Relic worship, as depicted here, is not something merely preliminary to more intellectual forms of Buddhist practice, but instead constitutes an essential ethical obligation of Sri Lankan Buddhists to show their gratitude by venerating the Buddha. The same interpretation is also applicable to the establishment of the relics not specifically foretold by the Buddha, such as the relic on the lance of King Duṭṭhagāmaṇī in the Maricavaṭṭi shrine and the neck-bone relic at Mahiyaṅgaṇa, as the proliferation of relics in Sri Lanka conforms to the general resolution made by the Buddha to provide sites of veneration for people after he has left the world.

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480 *Thūp* 239: *Tassa bhikkhusaṅgho evam āha: āvuso soṇuttara, tathāgato maraṇamañce nipanno sakkaṃ devarājānaṃ āmantetvā, mayhaṃ aṭṭhadoṇappamāṇesu sārīrikadhātusu ekaṃ doṇaṃ koliyarājūhi sakkataṃ anāgate tambapaṇṇidīpe mahācetiye patiṭṭhahissatīti āha.*

481 *Thūp* 34, 172. Cf. *SThūp* 72-73, and my translation of that resolution in chapter four, section three above. Trainor also points out that the above quote demonstrates how the perceived intention of the Buddha to have his relics enshrined in Sri Lanka could be used to legitimate the theft of the relics from the *nāga*s by the novice Soṇuttara. See his *Relics, Ritual, and Representation in Buddhism*, pp. 124-125.

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So while the predictions regarding the movement of relics to Sri Lanka reflect a certain sense of inevitability regarding their arrival in the island, other predictions provide an impetus for moral action performed by pious Buddhist agents. In these cases the predictions from the past create ethical obligations for the *satpuruṣa*s who, by recalling history, are made aware of their current responsibilities. The first example of a past prediction detailing one's present obligations is seen in the efforts of King Asoka (Sinh: Aśoka) to spread the Buddha's relics throughout the lands of his kingdom. When nearly all the relics were gathered together and enshrined by King Ajātasattu, the monk Mahākassapa is said to have had inscribed on a gold plate, "In the future a prince named Piyadāsa, having raised the parasol [of state], will become a righteous king named Asoka. He will make these relics widely spread."[482] Years later, when Asoka uncovers the relic deposit and has the inscription read aloud, he rejoices by clapping and says, "I have been seen [*diṭṭho*] by the Venerable Thera Mahākassapa."[483] The narratives of the *Thūpavaṃsa*s then proceed to relate that King Asoka, in accordance with the prediction, built eighty-four thousand *thūpa*s and made the Buddha's relics widely spread.

A similar case where knowledge of the past conditions moral action by a Buddhist agent is illustrated in the account of the preparations made by the *arahant* Mahinda (Sinh: Mihiñdu) to go to Sri Lanka and spread the Buddha's Dispensation. The narrative tells us that Mahinda has delayed his trip to the island because the reigning king is very old and is likely to be of little help when

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[482] *Thūp* 182: *Anāgate piyadāso nāma kumāro chattam ussāpetvā asoko nāma dhammarājā bhavissati. So imā dhātuyo vitthārikā karissatīti.*

[483] *Thūp* 190: *Diṭṭho'haṃ ayyena mahākassapattherenā 'ti vatvā vāmahatthaṃ ābhujitvā dakkhiṇahatthena appoṭhesi.*

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it comes to establishing a firm foundation for the Buddhist religion to continue and flourish there in the future. At first, the readers and listeners are only told that Mahinda's preceptor, the Venerable Moggaliputtatissa, has requested that he go to Sri Lanka. After the elderly King Muṭasīva passes away, however, the deity Sakka (Sinh: Sak) approaches Mahinda and describes a prediction from the past compelling him to go to the island:

> When that month passed, Sak the king of the gods, having approached the Great Reverend Mihiňdu, venerating at his feet, announced thus. 'Reverend! King Muṭasīva of Lakdīva has passed away. Now his son Devanapātis has acceded to the throne of the king. Having received the marks of royalty which were sent to him by King Dharmāśoka, who is your father, he again had a second consecration held. Having also heard about the Three Refuges, he has become happy. Again when the Buddha, the Teacher of the Three Worlds, was living, he declared "In the future a Thera named Mihiňdu, having aroused serene joy in the people of Lakdiva, causing them to remove the Five Sins, will establish the Dispensation which will continue for five thousand years in this and that place." Therefore may you go to Lakdiva, Sir. I too will assist you,' he said.[484]

The above excerpt from the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* is instructive for the connection it makes between an event in the past —that is, the Buddha's prediction—and the requirement for action that it creates for the present. Furthermore, as far as I have been able to determine, the Buddha's prediction for Mahinda is not spoken of elsewhere in Buddhist historical narratives except for this instance when it is related secondhand by the deity Sakka. The

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484 *SThūp* 98: *E masa giya kala sakdev raja mihiňdu māhimiyan karā eḷaṁba pā vāňda mesē dānvīya. 'Svāmīni, lakdiva muṭasīva raja kālakriyā keḷēya. Dān uhu pit devanapāṭis raja rajayaṭa pāmiṇiyēya. Numbavahansēgē piya vū dharmāśoka rajjuruvan tamāṭa yāvū maňgul perahāra läba nävata deveni abhiṣēkaya karavīya. Tisaraṇa guṇa da asā satuṭu vūha. Nāvata tilōguru budurajāṇan vahansē jīvamāna kala 'matu mihiňdu naṁ tera lakdiva minisun pahadavā pas pav haravā pasvā dahasak pavatnā śasanaya ē ē sthānayehi pihiṭuvannēya' yi vadāḷa sēka. Eheyin numba vahansē lakdivaṭa vāḍiya mānava. Mamat numba vahansēṭa sahāya vēmi' yi kīya.* The "Five Sins" (*pas pav*) mentioned here correspond to the acts that are prohibited under the Five Precepts, that is to say, 1) killing living beings, 2) stealing, 3) improper sexual conduct, 4) speaking falsely, and 5) taking intoxicants.

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Bāhiranidāna of the commentary on the Vinaya, notes that the Thera Moggaliputtatissa perceives the "attainment of the sufficing condition (for *arahantship*)" in Mahinda, and in turn urges the king to have him ordained since he will be very helpful in promoting the Dispensation.[485] Otherwise, that text, the *Dīpavaṃsa* and the *Mahāvaṃsa* all present the Buddha's prediction for Mahinda first through the voice of Sakka.[486] Mahinda's virtuous act of bringing the Dispensation to Sri Lanka is made obligatory by the prediction of the Buddha, and thus we may note yet another instance where the past is conceived to generate an ethical awareness of one's moral responsibilities in the present.

It is significant, moreover, that the narrative at this point depicts the god Sakka as appealing to a distant event in the past to motivate Mahinda to action. Instead of reminding Mahinda that his preceptor has directed him to go to Sri Lanka, a fact that would itself seem sufficient to make him go, the deity instead relates an alleged historical event wherein the Buddha exercised his incredible foresight and identified Mahinda as a promoter of his Dispensation. In this way, Mahinda's subsequent career in assisting the establishment of Buddhism in Sri Lanka can be read as his fulfillment of an obligation that history put upon him. Furthermore, some of the acts undertaken by Mahinda in Sri Lanka also reflect a keen awareness of what happened in the past. The Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s both credit this monk with the idea of having the Bodhi Tree brought. Once again we find that history is invoked as a cause for moral action.

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485 *Sp* 44-45, 172: *Tato moggaliputtatissatthero rañño idaṃ vacanaṃ sutvā rājaputtassa mahindassa upanissayasampattiṃ sampassamāno, sace ayaṃ kumāro pabbajissati sāsanassa ativiya vuddhi bhavissatīti cintetvā.*

486 *Sp* 63, 188; *Dīp* XII. 16-23; *Mhv* XII. 15-16.

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Mahinda thus tells the king, "And in this island, the Bodhi Tree of the three previous Fully-Awakened Buddhas was established. The Bodhi Tree of our Meritorious One, emitting a network of attractive rays, should also be established."[487] In other words, knowledge of the past is given as a reason for enshrining the Bodhi Tree in Sri Lanka.

Mahinda also prophesies the future place where and by whom the Mahāthūpa will be built in accordance with knowledge that he has about the past. The *Thūpavaṃsa*s thus present the audience not only with the idea that the building of the Mahāthūpa in Anurādhapura was previously predicted, but also with an illustration of how history conditions Buddhist practice and sets up obligations for *satpuruṣa*s to fulfill. The *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* describes it thus:

> Again, one day the Thera came with the king to the place on the land where the Ruvanmäli Dāgāba would be constructed. On that day too they brought and gave campaka flowers to the king. And the king gave those campaka flowers to the Thera. The Thera venerated and offered the flowers at the site where the Ruvanmäli Dāgāba would be established. At that time the great earth shook. Then the king asked, 'Reverend! Why did the earth shake?' And the Thera said, 'Lord, our Buddha remained at this site for a moment's time. At this site in the future, they will build a great and wondrous *dāgāba* enshrining the relics of the world-transcending Buddha. This is the omen for that.' The king who heard those words said, 'Reverend! If that is so, I will build that *dāgāba*.' 'O' King! There are other meritorious acts that must be done by you. A king named Duṭugāmuṇu who will be your grandson will build the *dāgāba*,' he said. The king who heard those words, said, 'Reverend! If my grandson builds it, then certainly it will be as if done by me.' Saying thus, having a stone pillar of twelve cubits

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[487] *Thūp* 201: *Imasmiñ ca dīpe purimakānañ ca tiṇṇaṃ sammāsambuddhānaṃ bodhi patiṭṭhāsi. Amhākam pi bhagavato sarasaraṃsijālavissajjanakena bodhinā patiṭṭhātabbaṃ.* Cf. the Sinhala equivalent of Mahinda's speech, "Great King! The Bodhi Trees of the Fully Awakened Buddhas in the past were established in Laṅkādvīpa. It is fitting to establish the Bodhi Tree of our Buddha in this Laṅkādvīpa." See *SThūp* 106: *Maharaja! Laṅkādvīpayehi pera budu vū samyak sambuduvarayangē bōdhīn vahansē pihiṭi sēka. Apagē budurajāṇan vahansēgē bōdhīn vahansē mē laṅkādvīpayehi pihiṭuviya yuttēya.*

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> brought, and having letters inscribed that, 'In the future a king named Duṭugāmuṇu Abā, who will be the grandson of King Devanapātissa, will build a *dāgāba* at this site,' had it set up.[488]

Of course the knowledge of the past demonstrated by the Thera is extraordinary. There is no reason for the audience to expect that the king or any other being who is not an *arahant* should be able to make the same prediction. More significantly, however, this episode reinforces the idea that people who engage in virtuous acts, such as venerating and making offerings to the Buddha, do so while being acutely aware of history and the personal obligations that stem from it.

Thus, as predicted earlier in the *Thūpavaṃsa*s, at least some of the moral acts that King Duṭṭhagāmaṇī performs when he comes on the scene in the latter part of the narrative represent the fulfillment of predictions made known to him by history. Specifically, the efforts of Duṭṭhagāmaṇī to build the Brazen Palace and Mahāthūpa are shown in the texts to be precipitated by reading written documents from the past that outline what acts he would and should undertake:

> Thereupon the king thought, 'It is said that the Great Thera Mahinda spoke thus to my grandfather: 'Your grandson, Great King, Duṭṭhagāmaṇī Abhaya will build the Shrine of Golden Garlands that is

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488 *SThūp* 109-110: *Nāvata ek davasak ruvanmāli dāgāba baňdinā bhūmi sthānayaṭa rajjuruvan hā terun vahansē vāḍi sēka. E davas da rajjuruvanṭa sapumal gena āra dunha. Rajjuruvō da ē sapumal terun vahansēṭa dunha. Terun vahansē ruvanmāli dāgāba pihiṭuvana tāna mal pudā vāňda vadāḷa sēka. Eviṭa maha poḷova sālīgiyāya. Rajjuruvō eviṭa 'Svāmīni! Kumak piṇisa poḷova sāliṇidā' yi vicāḷōya. Terun vahansē da 'Dēvayeni! apagē budu rajāṇan vahansē mohotak kal me tāna vāḍa siṭi sēka. Me tāna ena davasa lovūturā budungē dhātu vaḍā āścaryyamat mahat dāgabak baňdavati. Iṭa mē pūrvanimittaya 'yi vadāḷa sēka. E bas āsū rajjuruvō 'Svāmīni! Esē vī naṁ ē dāgaba mama karami' yi kivuya. 'Rajjuruvani! Topa visin kaḷamanā sesu pinkaṁ āta. Topagē muṇuburu vū duṭugāmuṇu naṁ rajek dāgaba karavannēya' yi vadāḷa sēka. E bas āsū rajjuruvō, 'Svāmīni! Māgē muṇuburā karavatot mā kaḷā naṁ veyi' kivuya. Esē kiyā doḷos riyan śilāstambhayak genvā gena devanapātissa rajjuruvangē muṇuburu vū duṭugāmuṇu abā naṁ rejek ena davasa me tāna dāgaba karavannēya' yi akuru koṭavā siṭuvūha.*

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> one hundred and twenty cubits high, and he will build the nine-story Brazen Palace, which will become an *uposatha* hall for the Sangha.' Having considered this, and then looking around, seeing an inscription on a gold plate placed in a casket in the king's residence, had it read aloud. Having heard that, 'In the future after one hundred and forty years have passed, Duṭṭhagāmaṇī Abhaya, the son of Kākavaṇṇatissa, will build this and that,' becoming delighted and elated, he clapped his hands and said, 'So indeed I have been seen by the Great Mahinda!'[489]

Having been foreseen in this manner, King Duṭṭhagāmaṇī responds by taking up one project and then the other without hesitation. The narratives of the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s suggest that the king's moral agency in building those projects was largely informed by encounters with history that left him feeling grateful for being foreseen and obligated to carry out the acts expected of him.

In all of the above examples—namely, where Mahakassapa predicted that Asoka would spread the relics, where the Buddha was said to have predicted that Mahinda would establish his Dispensation in Laṅkā, and where Mahinda predicted that Duṭṭhagāmaṇī would build the Mahāthūpa, the *Thūpavaṃsa*s emphasize the idea that a knowledge of history and the provisions that others made for oneself motivates devotional acts. Moral agency is therefore shown to emerge out of a subjectivity wherein one realizes that one has been "seen" already and that one's needs have been taken care of. To learn that one has been "seen" by the Buddha or another virtuous agent in

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[489] *Thūp* 217: *Tato rājā cintesi, mahāmahindatthero kira mama ayyakassa devānampiyatissarañño evam āha: nattā te mahārāja duṭṭhagāmaṇī abhayo vīsaṃ hatthasatikaṃ sovaṇṇamāliṃ thūpaṃ kāressati, saṅghassa ca uposathāgārabhūtaṃ navabhūmakaṃ lohapāsādaṃ karessatīti. Cintetvā ca pana olokento rājagehe karaṇḍake ṭhapitaṃ suvaṇṇapaṭṭalekhaṃ disvā taṃ vācesi. Anāgate cattālīsaṃ vassasataṃ atikamma kākavaṇṇatissassa putto duṭṭhagāmaṇī abhayo idañ c' idañ ca kāressatīti sutvā haṭṭho udaggo appoṭhesi, ayyena kira vata 'mhi diṭṭho mahāmahindenā ti.* Cf. *SThūp* 144.

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the past, in turn, suggests that the means for one's own welfare have already been accomplished. The idea that the Buddha has foreseen beings who would come to exist after he passed away conforms with the claim that he is "the Omniscient One" whose knowledge of the causal relations between acts (*kamma*) and their corresponding fruits (*vipāka*) among all beings permits him to know everything concerning the future.[490] Thus, starting from this assumption, Buddhist histories tend to affirm that just as earlier inhabitants of Laṅkā were foreseen by the Buddha, the readers and listeners contemporary to their texts were also seen and provided for by him.[491] At the same time, those various predictions serve in some sense to remind a Buddhist audience that they too have obligations to act in response to what history teaches them. The narratives of the *Thūpavaṃsa*s thus promote a feeling of subjectivity marked by

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490 Endo, *Buddha in Theravada Buddhism*, p. 31 For a relatively early example of where the Buddha predicts the appearance and acts of later beings, see the allusion that comes near the beginning of *Milindapañha* regarding the claim that the Buddha foresaw the discussion between the monk Nāgasena and King Milinda: "Both of these ones [Nāgasena and Milinda] spent one Buddha-interval transmigrating among gods and humans. Thereupon, just as the Thera Moggaliputta Tissa was seen by our Buddha, they also were seen. As it was explained [by him], 'When five hundred years have passed since my *parinibbāna*, they will be born. Whatever Dhamma and Vinaya that was preached by me in a subtle form, they will analyze that, making it disentangled and clear by means of asking questions and [answering with] appropriate similes.'" See *Miln* 3: *Te ubho pi devesu ca manussesu ca saṃsarantā ekaṃ buddhantaraṃ khepesuṃ. Atha amhākaṃ bhagavatā pi yathā moggaliputtotissa-thero dissati evam ete pi dissati: mama parinibbānato pañcavassasate atikkante ete uppajjissanti. Yaṃ mayā sukhumaṃ katvā desitaṃ dhammavinayaṃ taṃ ete pañhapucchana-opammayuttivasena nijjaṭaṃ niggumbaṃ katvā vibhajissantīti niddiṭṭhā.*

491 See, for example, the speech ascribed to King Parākamabāhu II (1236-1270 CE) by the author of the *Pūjāvaliya*, wherein a contemporary king maintains that he too was foreseen by the Buddha along with the great kings who preceded him: "Our Buddha, having lied down on the bed of the Final Nirvana, made five great resolutions. Not declaring a small thing like that, but a great sound in this world, it is certain that a subtle resolution also arose from the words of the great resolution. Because of these such reasons, I do not think that the Buddha, who regards those in the future who have pious confidence in his Dispensation that lasts five thousand years, did not see me too." See *Pjv* 788: *Apa budun parinirvāṇa mañcakayehi vādahevapañcamahā adhiṣṭhānayak kaḷa sēka. Mē lokayehi mahā śabdayek naṁ e baṅdu vū kuḍā vastuvak no haṅgavā maya, maha adhiṣṭhāna śabdayen upan sūkṣama vū adhiṣṭhānat ātivanu ekānta ma ya. Mē ādī kāraṇayen pandahasak havurudu pavatnā taman vahansēgē śāsanayehi matu vana śraddhāvantayan balannā vū buduhu māt nuduṭu sēk dō hō yi no sitami.*

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the dual recognition that one's needs have been foreseen and that one is obliged to act in accordance with the expectations of those to whom one should feel grateful.

V.3 THE ETHICS OF DEVOTION

Since the *satpuruṣa* is depicted as the "flesh and blood" reader or listener transformed by an encounter with the narratives of Buddhist history, it is reasonable to conclude that the performance of devotional offerings (*pūjā*) to the Buddha is the practical consequence of having become a virtuous person. Indeed,the Pali and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s routinely portray devotional veneration as the end product of the ethical transformation that they work to effect. Far from being depicted as a marginal or lesser religious act, making offerings is presented as a highly ethical and morally efficacious practice. The emotions and moral subjectivity that arise out of an encounter with historical narratives frequently lead to the giving of *pūjā* in the *Thūpavaṃsa*s. The idealized moral agents in these narratives, both lay and monastic, are those who express the desire for making offerings to the Buddha. It is, in other words, something that virtuous persons do. Of course one might expect that relic histories contain accounts of *pūjā*, but what is striking about such accounts is the naturalness with which the characters in the texts make offerings. More often than not, *pūjā* is represented as simply occurring, without any explicit acknowledgment of intentionality in the actors. As such, we are led to inquire further into how *pūjā* is itself constructed as a ritual performance that just happens and does not necessarily require an admonishment to be done. This

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will then lead to a consideration of *pūjā* as a practice with significant ethical implications for the constitution of moral subjectivity in relation to historical narratives.

In the Sri Lankan context today, the Buddhist act of *pūjā* consists largely of a memorial offering in honor of the Buddha. To offer a flower, some water, incense, music, dancing, and other similarly pleasing gifts to the Buddha constitues an act that people believe entitles one to earn merit (P: *puñña*). Along with material offerings, gestures of reverence and respect such as bowing also form a type of *pūjā* that can be offered to the Buddha. Despite the fact that Theravāda Buddhism affirms that the Buddha has passed out of this world in complete and final Nirvana, several texts speak to the great merit that is acquired without any intervention on the part of the Buddha by those who make offerings to him.[492] The act of giving a flower, for example, to the Buddha at a *thūpa*, a *bodhi* tree, or in front of a Buddha-image is commonly thought to carry great rewards for a devotee. The Pāli stanzas that may be recited while offering a flower to the Buddha are readily found in most worship handbooks (Sinh: *vandanā pot*) and constitute part of a basic ritual knowledge that is possessed by most Buddhists in Sri Lanka today.[493] The following quote is taken from the first entries in a chapter on *pūjā* that is found in a contemporary worship manual:

> I offer this heap of flowers, endowed with the virtues of color and scent to the splendid, lotus-like feet of the Lord of Sages.

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492 Trainor, *Relics, Ritual and Representation in Buddhism*, pp. 160-163.

493 Trainor, *Relics, Ritual and Representation in Buddhism*, p. 154, n. 32. See, also, Karunatillake, "The Religiousness of Buddhists in Sri Lanka Through Belief and Practice," p. 28.

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> I make an offering to the Buddha with this flower. By this merit of mine, may I obtain release. Just as this flower withers away, so too my body will go to ruin. [494]

What I seek to highlight here is that the Pāli verse that is commonly recited when offering flowers to the Buddha underscores the notion that *pūjā* is a meritorious act that gives occasion to the wish for Nirvana. It is not, however, a practice that is usually associated with ethics. One can recognize that this *pūjā* expresses devotion to the Buddha and reinforces the philosophical notion of impermanence as an existential reality. Yet scholarly interpretations of Buddhist ethics do not immediately take such acts to exemplify Buddhist moral life.

In his entry on "Ethics" in the *Encyclopaedia of Buddhism*, P. D. Premasiri summarizes the generally accepted notion that Buddhist ethics has a rational foundation in discovering which types of acts lead to positive or negative fruits, and subsequently encouraging good conduct that is beneficial to one's present and future lives. He describes Buddhist ethics as having a consequentialist approach toward moral reasoning, whereby a person with virtue is urged to determine the likely consequences of an action before engaging in those that can be said to have "wholesome" (*kusala*) effects on oneself and others.[495] Premasiri also notes a difference between the words *kusala* and *puñña* in the Pāli canonical literature. Whereas *puñña*, or "merit,"

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494 Ven. Attuḍāvē Rāhula, ed., *Set Pirit sahita Vandanā Gāthā* (Nedimala, Sri Lanka: Buddhist Cultural Centre, 1997), pp. 53-54: "*Vaṇṇa-gandha-guṇopetaṃ/ etaṃ kusuma-santatiṃ/ pūjayāmi munindassa/ sirīpāda-sarōruhe. ([Sinh:] Varṇayen hā suvañdin yukta vū mē mal rāśīya budurajāṇan vahansē gē śrī pāda padmayehi pūjā karami).*
Pūjemi buddhaṃ kusumenatena/ puññena metena labhāmi mokkhaṃ/ pupphaṃ milāyāti yathā idamme/ kāyo tathāyāti vināsabhāvaṃ. ([Sinh:] Mē kusumin budun pudami. Ē pinin nivan labamvā. Yamsē mal mālavē da, esē ma magē sirura da vānaseyi).

495 P. D. Premasiri, "Ethics" *Encyclopaedia of Buddhism*, V. 1, ed. W. G. Weeraratne (Colombo: The Government of Sri Lanka, 1990), pp. 155-156.

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is identified with those acts that promote happiness in a future life, by contrast *kusala* refers to acts that lead one to the higher Buddhist goal of Nirvana.[496] Although these two terms tend to become blurred in later Buddhist texts like the *Thūpavaṃsa*s, it is still possible to see how an interpretation of Buddhist ethics as "consequentialist" will tend to devalue acts of merit in which the results are seen to comprise mostly human and heavenly felicities.[497]

More generally, ethics in Buddhism is discussed in terms of moral precepts and conduct that facilitates the attainment of Nirvana. Hence, it is thought to reflect the sphere of *kusala* more than that of *puñña*. Thus the late Rev. Hammalawa Saddhatissa can write, "[T]he ultimate ideal aim which may serve as the ultimate standard of right conduct, relates, according to Buddhist thought, to the supramundane or *lokuttara* state, and the connection between the moralities of everyday life and this *lokuttara* state is one which is entirely covered by the Buddha's teaching."[498] Accordingly, Saddhatissa's discussion of ethics focuses on the Five Precepts (P: *pañca sīla*) that prescribe the avoidance of immoral acts that carry negative consequences for oneself and others. He also draws our attention to positive virtues that should be cultivated. Laypersons, for example, are told to develop the qualities of pious confidence (*saddhā*), morality (*sīla*), modesty (*hirī*), shame (*ottappa*), learnedness

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496 Premasiri, "Ethics," pp. 146-147.

497 Note, for example, the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa*'s description of the divine palace of the goddess Bīriṇi, who is said to have obtained her heavenly fortune because of the merit (*kusalin*) from having cooked alms with a composed mind in her former life (*SThūp* 144). The term "*kusala*" in this sense is virtually identifiable with the concept of "saṃsāric" ends that are otherwise associated with *puñña*.

498 Hammalawa Saddhatissa, *Buddhist Ethics: The Path to Nirvana* (London: Wisdom Publications, 1987), pp. 12-13.

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(*bahussuta*), charity (*cāga*), and knowledge (*paññā*), among others.[499] Implicit in these types of views about Buddhist ethics, and what works to exclude *pūjā* from any serious consideration as an ethical endeavor, is that the moral life is assumed to be the sole product of individual choice and intention. In other words, moral agency lies within each person and he (or she), to quote Saddhatissa once again, "must travel for himself, beginning with the practice of the common moralities up to the supramundane state beyond good and evil."[500]

This view of Buddhist ethics, I should add, is not wholly incorrect. If one chooses to read the earliest strata of Pāli Buddhist texts, one will find ample evidence to support the claims of many contemporary Buddhist ethicists. Still, our study of the *Thūpavaṃsa*s shows that a consequentialist view of Buddhist ethics is too narrow, since it presumes all moral acts are reasoned out and evaluated by a Buddhist agent for the sake of attaining Nirvana. Instead, the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s depict how a virtuous person is constructed out of emotions and the awareness of his or her place in history. The moral subjectivity arising out of the moral obligations from an encounter with historical narratives is realized primarily through emotionally predisposed acts of *pūjā* rather than the reasoned practice of prescribed moral precepts. Put differently, Buddhist history-writing in medieval Sri Lanka invests ritualized devotion with a moral significance and expands upon the notion of ethics to include the reflection on one's obligations that arise out of knowing what was done in the past and feeling happy and grateful about it. In this way, the Pāli

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499 Saddhatissa, *Buddhist Ethics*, p. 104.
500 Saddhatissa, *Buddhist Ethics*, p. 13.

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and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsas* remind us that one can be ethical without necessarily striving solely for Nirvana.[501]

The narratives in the *Thūpavaṃsas* supply the reader and listener with a detailed, although often disconnected, picture of *pūjā* as the moral product of the ethics of Buddhist history. Throughout both texts one finds descriptions, recollections, and exhortations connected with making offerings to the Buddha and, to a lesser extent, the Sangha of monks. Indeed, the moral agency of the characters therein is realized not in their adherence to the Five Precepts or the Noble Eightfold Path, but rather in the consistency of their efforts to venerate and make offerings to the Triple Gem. For example, the performance of *pūjā* as a response to the moral subjectivity that comes from knowing history is illustrated in where King Aśoka compels the *nāga* king Mahākāḷa to project an image of the Buddha, by saying "Show to the eyes of everyone including myself the form of the Fully Awakened Buddha."[502] From this, we see how the narrative of the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* invites the audience to "gaze" along with the king upon the Buddha image as described in the text. We may examine the shorter account given in the Pāli *Thūpavaṃsa* to learn what happens next:

> [W]hile seeing the image of the Buddha decorated with the Eighty Secondary Marks produced by the power of his merit and strewn over his entire body, and which was like a water surface decorated with red lotuses, blue water-lilies, and white lotuses in bloom because of the splendor of its Thirty-two Marks of a Great Person, and which was like

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501 In this regard, Charles Hallisey has noted that Theravāda thinking on "social ethics" has generally been negelected in scholarship because of an overemphasis on the ethics associated with the individualism of renunciation. Social ethics, as he describes it, is reflected in a vision of society where caring for others is a marker of the good life. See his "Auspicious Things," in *Buddhism in Practice*, ed. Donald S. Lopez (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), pp. 413-414.

502 *SThūp* 88: *Samyak sambuddha rajōttamayāṇangē rūpaya mā ātuḷu vū hāma dena āsa dakva' yi kīha.*

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> the surface of the moon that has splendor from the diffuse radiance of the network of rays from the host of stars, and which was like a golden mountain peak encircled with streaks of lightning and rainbows in the radiant sheen of evening because of the splendor of the fathom-length halo interwined with multicolored rays of such types as blue, yellow, and red, and having splendor from its beautiful head that was shining from the garlands of pure rays of numerous colors and was like an eye-ointment for the host of *brahmas*, gods, humans, *nāgas*, and *yakkhas*, [the king] made what is called an 'eye-offering' [*akkhipūjaṃ*] for seven days.[503]

As we have seen above, the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* includes essentially the same account, albeit much elaborated.[504] Yet what becomes clearer in the Sinhala text is the parallel established between Aśoka's eye-offering (Sinh: *netrapūjā*) and the Buddha's eye-offering made to the Bodhi Tree for seven days that is described earlier in the narrative.[505] The intertextuality that is merely implied in the Pāli *Thūpavaṃsa* due to its abbreviated account of the Buddha's life is explicitly displayed in the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa*. Parākrama Paṇḍita has laid out a direct correlation between the Buddha's *pūjā* and that of Aśoka, and in so doing, establishes a clear association between gratitude and worship. Just as the Buddha gazes upon the Bodhi Tree in gratitude for how it helped him attain Enlightenment, King Aśoka (and us by virtue of being included in the word "everyone") gazes upon the image of the Buddha. In this way, the *Sinhala*

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503 *Thūp* 185: *Sakalasarīre vippakiṇṇapuññappabhāvanibbattāsīti-anubyañjanapaṭimaṇḍitaṃ dvattiṃsamahāpurisalakkhaṇasassirīkatāya vikasitakamal' uppalapuṇḍarīkapatimaṇḍitam iva salilatalaṃ tārāgaṇaraṃsijālavisaravipphurita-sobhāsamujjalam iva gaganatalaṃ nīlapītalohitādhibhedavicittavaṇṇaraṃsi-vinaddhabyāmappabhāparikkhepavilāsitāya sañjhāppabhānurāga-indhanuvijjullatā-parikkhittam iva kanakagirisikharaṃ nānāvirāgavimalaketumālāsamujjalitacāru-matthakasobhaṃ nayanarasāyanam iva brahmadevamanujanāga-yakkhagaṇānaṃ buddharūpaṃ passanto sattadivisaṃ akkhipūjaṃ nāma akāsi.*

504 See the parallel Sinhala quote above in chapter four, section two.

505 *SThūp* 57, 89. The Buddha's eye-offering to the Bodhi Tree is quoted above in chapter four, section three.

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Thūpavaṃsa underscores an idealized ethical sense of gratitude that motivates and is displayed in *pūjā* performed by moral agents in the past.

The act of *pūjā* is thus generally represented as a technique of remembering the Buddha and for showing gratitude for what he accomplished in the past. We have seen above that the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsas* at times resemble a devotional handbook that describes how to do *pūjā*. Again, in the two scenes where a monk attempts to give an offering to the Mahāthūpa without accepting the wages that are insisted by King Duṭṭhagāmaṇī, the reader or listener is instructed on the finer points of making offerings. After the first Thera is found, the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* describes how he is given perfumed scents and flowers to offer at the shrine of the Bodhi Tree in Anurādhapura:

> Then the guard. taking along those flowers and perfumes, announced, 'Reverend! These are the perfumes and flowers that have been given by the king for the sake of honoring the Thera who has come as a visitor.' The Thera who heard that news, becoming happy, cleaning the flower pedestal, smearing it with the perfumes, offering the flowers, standing at the four cardinal points [in worship], having circumambulated [the Bodhi Tree], venerating it, and having stood at the eastern gate, evoking joy, he remained looking at the offering of flowers.[506]

Here we find almost a step-by-step description of the physical and emotional components of worshipping the relic of the Bodhi Tree used formerly by the Buddha (P: *pāribhogika-dhātu*). The reader or listener is essentially told how he or she should ideally perform *pūjā*. While rejoicing from start to finish, one should offer flowers in an orderly way in combination with gestures of veneration such as folding one's palms together and raising them to one's head

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506 *SThūp* 159: *Eviṭa balatā ē mal hā suvaňda gena gos, 'Svāmīni! Āgantukava vāḍi terun vahansē pudanu piṇisa rajjuruvan vahansē dun suvaňda malā' yi dānvīya. Epavat āsū terunvahansē satuṭuva malasun sōdhā suvaňdin piribaḍa gena mal pudā sataratenaka siṭa pādakuṇu koṭa vāňda nāgenahira doraṭuyehi siṭa prīti upadavā mal pūjā bala balā vāḍisiṭi sēka.* Cf. *Thūp* 229.

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(P: *añjaliṃ paggayha*) and walking around the tree. The desired emotional state of serene joy in *pūjā* is further reemphasized by the guard's admonishment to the monk who, having learned that the perfumes and flowers he offered were given by the king as payment for the brick he gave to the Mahāthūpa, becomes distraught and thinks that his act of merit has been nullified. The guard, however, points out that the monk's act will earn him merit regardless of accepting payment for it: "Leaving aside the one and one-half *yala*s of jasmine buds, even if the king had given that much gold flowers, it would not be worth the lump of clay that was given by you, Sir, to build the *dāgāba*. Reverend! May you arouse serene joy in your mind."[507]

While giving a step-by-step account of the Thera's *pūjā*, the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s offer instructions to their readers and listeners on how to worship. Significantly, both texts stand in marked contrast to the *Mahāvaṃsa*'s terse account of this scene: "The king, having three jars of jasmine buds placed in the courtyard of the Bodhi Tree by the guard, had them given to the monk. When the monk who was there, without realizing it, made an offering, the guard informed him. Then did he understand."[508] The elaboration of this scene in the narratives of the *Thūpavaṃsa*s serves to highlight the practice of *pūjā* for the audience. That apparent concern in these texts underscores the efforts made by the authors towards detailing how to cultivate a relationship with the Buddha who has passed away in Nirvana. The Pāli and Sinhala

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[507] *SThūp* 159: *Dāsaman kākuḷu yeḷayāḷa tabā epamaṇa ranmal rajjuruvō dunnō vī namut numbavahansē dāgaba baṅdinaṭa dun māṭipiḍa no aganēya. Svāmīni! Sita pahadavā vadāḷa mānāvā' yi danvā giyēya.*

[508] *Mhv* XXX. 27-28: *Jātimakulakumbhe so mahābodhaṅgaṇe tayo/ thapāpetvā balatthena rājā dāpesi bhikkhuno./ Ajānitvā pūjayitvā ṭhitasse 'tassa bhikkhuno/ balattho taṃ nivedesi; tadā taṃ jāni so yati.*

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*Thūpavaṃsa*s display this relationship primarily in those scenes where humans, gods, *brahma*s, *nāga*s, and animals venerate the Buddha and his relics.[509] To reiterate an earlier point, the Buddha's *parinirvāṇa* has created the conditions through which beings venerate his relics and recognize their dependency on him. While the Buddha was alive, after attaining Nirvana under the Bodhi Tree, his relationship with the beings of the world is defined largely by his decision to journey about and expound upon the Dharma at the request of the king of *brahmās*.[510] In contrast, after his passing away from the world in the *parinirvāṇa*, the beings of the world make offerings of *pūjā* to the Buddha's remains.

Likewise, for those readers and listeners living in the world after the *parinirvāṇa* of Gotama Buddha, the *Thūpavaṃsa*s depict a vision wherein a virtuous person feels obligated to do *pūjā*. Indeed, the impulse to make an offering to the Buddha or the Sangha appears to be just as important as the manner in which it is done. More than simply serving as "models" for *pūjā*, the *Thūpavaṃsa*s underscore the expectation that the arousal of generalized emotions that transcend one's own sensuous experience make devotional veneration necessary. Simply put, emotions generated by historical narratives lead directly to *pūjā*. Characters in the texts who witness the miracles of relics or learn how they have been anticipated and their needs provided for are consistently described as being serenely joyful or grateful. Moreover, the

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509 For an example of animal veneration, see the account where the royal elephant, upon whose back the Buddha's right collar bone relic has been placed, refuses to let it be taken down off his back and spends the nights circumambulating the site where the Thūpārāma *dāgāba* is being built. See *Thūp* 198-199; *SThūp* 104-105.

510 *Thūp* 28, 167.

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*Thūpavaṃsa*s also portray *pūjā* as a natural and spontaneous response to such feelings. Emotion is not only productive of an awareness of one's obligations, but it is also represented in the narratives as being conducive to moral action. The Pāli *Thūpavaṃsa* alludes to this fact in an account of King Asoka's resolve to build monasteries throughout his realm:

> One day it is said that the king, having given a great alms-offering at the Asokārāma, sitting in the middle of the Sangha of monks numbering sixty thousand, offering the Four Requisites to the Sangha, asked this question: 'Reverends, What is the extent of the Dhamma preached by the Meritorious One?' 'Great King, There are eighty-four thousand sections of the Dhamma according to the division of the nine branches.' The king, giving rise to serene joy, said, 'I will make an offering with one monastery apiece for each section of the Dhamma.'[511]

From this, we might reasonably infer that the emotion of *pasāda* felt by the king upon hearing of the extent of the Dhamma that was taught for his benefit induces him to make a great offering in an attempt to reciprocate for what the Buddha has done.

The emotional basis for making offerings in the *Thūpavaṃsa*s is further emphasized in the depictions of the zeal with which many characters in their narratives do *pūjā*. The veneration of the Buddha and his relics appears in these texts as a practice that can even be described as contagious. When one person starts to make offerings, others inevitably join in and participate. The impulse to make offerings is first illustrated in the story of Sumedha found in both texts. We have already noted the desire Sumedha feels to join in with the townsfolk and clear the road for the Buddha's arrival. Subsequent to that, once Dīpaṅkara

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511 *Thūp* 188: *Ekadivasaṃ kira rājā asokārāme mahādānaṃ datvā saṭṭhisahassasaṅkhassa bhikkhusaṅghassa majjhe nisajja saṅghaṃ catūhi paccayehi pavāretvā imaṃ pañhaṃ pucchi, 'Bhante bhagavatā desitadhammo nāma kittako hotīti. Mahārāja, nava aṅgāni khandhato caturāsīti dhammakkhandhasahassānīti. Rājā dhamme pasīditvā ek' ekaṃ dhammakkhandhaṃ ek' ekena vihārena pūjessāmīti.* Cf. *SThūp* 93.

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Buddha predicts that Sumedha will become a Buddha in the future, his *pūjā* to the Bodhisattva with eight handfuls of flowers and circumambulation spreads to other offerings made by four hundred thousand *arahants*, the ordinary humans, and the gods in like fashion.[512] The almost mechanical way in which these beings make offerings to Sumedha suggests the idea that the desire to join in on *pūjā* is almost irresistible.

Another vivid example of contagious *pūjā* is found in the description of the offerings given immediately upon the relics are enshrined in the Mahāthūpa. The account in the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* suggests that the impulse to venerate is transfered even between the animate and inanimate realms. When King Duṭugāmuṇu makes a resolution that the relics should assume the form of the Buddha reclining in his *parinirvāṇa* in order to demonstrate that they will remain established for everyone's benefit throughout five thousand years, as soon as he sets them down to be enshrined, they assume that very form, "pleasing and delighting the minds of everyone who looked."[513] Thereupon, the text again depicts how the urge to make offerings is spontaneously felt:

> Along with the enshrining of the relics, the great earth jumped up and roared like a bunch of metal dishes which were struck by an iron bar. The Great Meru Mountain also continued to bow down and venerate. The Seven Mountains also danced and struck each other as if hitting peak with peak. The Seven Great Lakes also were decorated with the Five Kinds of Lotuses. The Great Ocean that has a salty taste also became sweetened water. The gods and *brahmās* who inhabit the Six Divine Worlds exclaimed 'Sadhu'. . . . The Great King Duṭugāmuṇu, who became happy having seen these wonders, offering sovereignty over this entire Laṅkādvīpa with the white parasol that had the gold handle and that was fixed above his head to those relics for seven days,

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512 See *Thūp* 153; *SThūp* 6.

513 *SThūp* 187. For a brief account of the five thousand years reckoned as the length of time that the Buddha's Dispensation and his relics will survive in the world, See Nattier, *Once Upon a Future Time*, pp. 56-59.

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> again he unfastened and offered his ornaments worth thirty-thousand [gold coins] in which he was adorned. When the king had thus made the offerings, all these beings, namely the sixteen thousand consorts of that king, various royal officials, etc., the Ten Great Warriors beginning with Nandimitra, about eleven thousand soldiers with swords, many women and men, gods and *brahmās*, *nāgas* and *suparṇas*, *yakṣas* and *rakṣasas*, *siddhas* and *vidyādharas*, unfastening their own ornaments with which they were adorned, made offerings to the relics.[514]

Such an image of collective veneration strengthens the argument that the *Thūpavaṃsas* portray *pūjā* as the natural response to generalized emotions of piety that spread easily from one being to another. The texts do not simply portray individuals consciously resolving to worship by themselves. Rather, the effect of the narrative is to show large groups of humans and other beings spontaneously making offerings to the Triple Gem in moments of heightened emotion. The implication is that to witness one being who gives rise to serene joy and does *pūjā* leads another to feel and do the same. At the same time, the images of the inanimate earth, mountains, and bodies of water celebrating and venerating the relics draw attention to what Ninian Smart has called the "responsive universe" of Theravāda cosmology, and further suggest that the whole world has benefitted from what the Buddha has done in the past.[515]

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514 *SThūp* 187-188: *Dhātu pihiṭuvīma hā samaṅga mahapoḷova nārāvayen gāsu lōtali samūhayak men gugurā pāna nāṅgēya. Mahāmeru parvataya da nāmī vāṅduṁ gena siṭiyēya. Saptakūṭa parvatayō da, idin isa aninnāk men ovunovun pāhāra nāṭuha. Sapta mahāvil da paspiyumen sādunōya. Luṇu rasa vū mahamuhudu da mihiri pān viya, sadevlō vāsi deviyō da brahmayō da sādhukāra pāvātvuha.... Mē aścaryya dāka satuṭu vū duṭugāmuṇu maharaja da tamā hisaṭa karana lada ran daṅḍu āti dhavalacchetrayen hā me siyalu laṅkādvīpayehi rājyaya da satdavasak ē dhātūn vahansēṭa pūjā koṭa nāvata tamā pāḷaṅda gena siṭiyā vū tisdahasak aganā ābharaṇa da galvā pidīya. Me sē rajjuruvan pūjā koṭa siṭi kalhi ē rajjuruvangē soḷos dahasak bisōvaru da rāja rāja mahāmātyādīhu da nandimitrādī daśamahāyōdhayō da ekoḷos dahas eksiyayak pamaṇa siriyōdhayō da bohō strīpuruṣayō da divya brahmayō da nāga suparṇayō da yakṣa rākṣasayō da siddha vidyādharayō da yana mē siyallō ma tama taman pālaṅda gena siṭi ābharaṇa galvā dhātuvahansēṭa pūjā kaḷaha.*

515 Smart, "Action and Suffering in the Theravāda Tradition," p. 375. Smart's discussion of how the cosmos responds to good and evil deeds is made more specifically with reference to the manner in which dispositions can be communicated to other parts of the universe outside the finite and impermanent individual. He also notes the moral implications of such

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The significance of the above description of *pūjā* in the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* is further emphasized in what follows next in the narrative. Since the text suggests that one offering will naturally lead to more offerings, the descriptions of *pūjā* that appear throughout the *Thūpavaṃsa*s in turn points to the expectation that their readers and listeners who encounter such episodes will be moved to respond similarly with offerings of their own. The contagion of *pūjā* is therefore implicitly assumed to spread easily from within the narrative to without. Thus, at the point where all the beings have unfastened their ornaments and given them to the relics, the narrator's voice intrudes again, suggesting that the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* is designed to cause real effects in the world:

> Therefore, if there is someone who has made an offering with reverence to the living Omniscient One, who was worshipped by the inhabitants of the Three Worlds, and further, there is someone who has made an offering to a relic of that Omniscient One that measures the size of a mustard seed, recognizing that the wholesome fruit in the serene joy of that mind is equal to the offering that was made to the living Omniscient One, all beings should offer flowers and lamps to those relics.[516]

While we have seen earlier how the Pāli version of that quote can be read rhetorically to establish the view that relics are essentially equivalent to the Buddha, the above quote can be read in this context as exhibiting an awareness that descriptions in the text, in turn, give rise to corresponding effects outside of it. Whereas a similar verse appears in *Mahāvaṃsa* XXX. 100, immediately

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a view by adding that cultivating gentleness should theoretically help others to be gentle and happy while, at the same time, benefit that individual in a future life (p. 375).

516 *SThūp* 188: *Mesē heyin yaṁ kenek tunlō vāsīn visin pudana laddāvū jīvamāna sarvajñayan vahansēṭa mesē ādara sahitava pudana lada da esē heyin ma, aba āṭayak pamaṇa vū ē sarvajñayan vahansēgē dhātūvak yaṁ kenek pudadda, ē citta prasādayehi kusala vipākaya jīvamāna sarvajñayan vahansēṭa, kaḷa pūjāva hā samānaya yi dāna siyaḷu satvayan visin ma ē dhātūn vahansēṭa mal pahan pidiya yuttē ya.* Cf. *Thūp* 247 and my translation of the Pāli above in chapter three, section three.

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following the an explanation of how the psychic powers of a Thera, the gods, and the king brought the relic chamber to completion, it appears in the *Thūpavaṃsa*s after an account of the offerings made when the relics are enshrined. In other words, the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s explicitly connect *pūjā* in the narrative with *pūjā* in the world in a way that is not found in the *Mahāvaṃsa*. Thus, the *Thūpavaṃsa*s exceed the capacity to function as handbooks for the performance of *pūjā* by presuming that their narratives are empowered to give rise to *pūjā* in and of themselves.

In contrast to those "heretics" who refuse to make offerings to the Buddha's relics, beings who do *pūjā* are depicted as honoring their debt of gratitude to the one who has brought a range of felicities within their grasp. The *Thūpavaṃsa*s thereby construct an image of devotion as the ethical expression of a moral subjectivity. In the context of their narratives, *pūjā* is representative of how one ought to relate to the Buddha, recognizing one's obligations to and dependence on him. For the readers and listeners who encounter Buddhist histories, to make an offering to the Buddha is to assume and acknowledge one's identity as a recipient of his deeds. The moral obligations of being a recipient are clearly illustrated in the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa*'s account of the Ten Perfections (*dasa pāramitā*) that are represented as ten warriors who vanquish the army of Māra while Siddhārtha, the Buddha-to-be, sits under the Bodhi Tree on the eve of his Enlightenment.[517] One after another, the personification of a

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[517] The text reads, "Will the ten warriors, namely my Perfections that were cultivated throughout four incalculable world-periods and one hundred-thousand eons, not defeat this [Māra] army?" *SThūp* 34: *Sārāsaṅkhya kalpa lakṣayak muḷullehi vaḍā vardhanaya kaḷa māgē pāramitā namāti yōdhayō dasa dena mē sēnāva biňda dī no laddā yi*. Godakumbura, in his *Sinhalese Literature*, points out that the episode in which the *pāramitā*s are figured as warriors is one of the examples in which the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* is shown to expand upon

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pāramitā steps up to drive off one battalion of Māra's army. Yet before doing so, each perfection recalls a Jātaka story in which the Bodhisattva strove to perfect that particular virtue personified. For example, in recalling the Cullasutasoma Jātaka wherein the Bodhisattva leaves his family and royal wealth to become a forest hermit, the Perfection of Renunciation (Sinh: *naiṣkramya pāramitā*) concludes that account by saying,

> [Y]ou, Sir, who practiced austerities in the forest for many days, not regarding royal prosperity together with your child even as much as a lump of spittle spat out in the early morning, you made that sacrifice on account of me, who has received the name 'Renunciation.' Will I not perform an act of service for the Svāmidaruvō who guarded me while giving up royal prosperity like this in births that number in the crores?[518]

As the recipient of the Bodhisattva's careful cultivation of the virtue of renunciation, the *pāramitā* articulates the obligation to do something in return for the Buddha. Recognizing that in the past, the Bodhisattva has given up so much for the sake of others, the warrior called "Renunciation" expresses the kind of moral subjectivity that the text attempts to elicit in its readers and listeners.

A similar account is found in the scene where the warrior named "Loving-Kindness" (Sinh: *maitrī*) recalls the Nigrodhamiga Jātaka to explain why it feels obligated to act on behalf of the Buddha. Instead of emphasizing the Bodhisattva's solitary act of renunciation, this story stresses how much he

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what is found in the Pāli version (p. 108). We might also note the striking juxtaposition between the Buddha's ten warriors and King Duṭugāmuṇu's Ten Great Warriors who help him defeat the Damiḷa army.

518 *SThūp* 36: *Bohō davasak venehi tapas kaḷa numba vahansē ē numba daruvan sahita rājya sampat aluyama dāmu keḷa piḍak koṭat nosalakā naiṣkramyaya yi naṁ lat mā piṇisa parityāga kaḷa sēka. Mesē keḷa gaṇan jātiyehi rājya sampat demin mā rāki svāmidaruvanṭa mama daskam no kereṁ da' yi.*

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cared for others around him. Included within this account is a brief aside, a story within the story, that details how a mother ignorantly, if also unintentionally, kills her child while trying to save its life.[519] Left behind in the desert, she is depicted as standing on top of her baby in burning sand, thinking that if she is saved, she can save her child. The narrator, presumably "Loving-Kindness," contrasts the misguided love of the woman with the selfless love of the Buddha, and explains, "[F]rom among the beings of the world who desire their own benefit, my Svāmidaruvō, giving your comfort to others, takes the suffering experienced by others upon yourself."[520] With that thought in mind, the narrative continues to relate how, as the golden deer-king, the Bodhisattva laid his own head down on a chopping block in place of a pregnant deer who was to be killed for the king. This gesture done with feelings of loving-kindness for another, in turn, convinces the king to give up hunting altogether:

> The king, having heard the fact that you lied down like that, having come running, having asked, 'Why, Noble One! Did I not bestow the freedom from fear [*abhaya*] to you earlier? What is the reason for lying down like this?,' and having heard the words that you said, 'I bestowed the freedom from fear to that female deer who is with child. I have taken her death upon myself,' he said,'If that is the case, I will bestow the freedom from fear to the female deer and to you, Sir. Please get up.' 'When only the two of us are protected, what will the other deer do? Killing them is like killing me,' and having heard the words that you said, the king replied, 'I will bestow the freedom from fear to them also.' In this manner, having procured the freedom from fear for all creatures, that is to say, for the kinds of four-footed animals, for the birds, and for

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519 *SThūp* 51. I have not yet found the source for this story of a woman and her baby who join a caravan of merchants travelling through the desert. As far as I can tell, it is either taken from a commentary or it might possibly be the interpolation of the author or a scribe.

520 *SThūp* 51-52: *Tamāṭa vāḍa kāmāti satva lōkayā kerehi māgē svāmidaruvō taman vahansēgē sāpa anuṇṭa dī, anun viňdinā duk taman vahansē kerehi lana sēka.* Note that the honorific verb suffix "*-sēka*" leaves the choice between a present and past tense verb ambiguous. In the context of the narrative, I have chosen to render it in the present tense, which in turn has implications towards making the audience of the text feel themselves to be included in the Buddha's love.

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> the fish, and having done the welfare for the world, rising up from the chopping block, having established the king in the Five Precepts, releasing all creatures from suffering, having made a sacrifice of your life, you, Sir, who extended loving-kindness, did not do it for anything else. You did this for the sake of not showing any deficiency of me, who has received the name 'Loving-Kindness.' Will I not do an act of service for you, Sir, who was like that?[521]

Similarly, from the perspective of the reader or listener, the Bodhisattva sacrificed his life for me too. Everyone gains from what the Buddha has done in the past since it has resulted in the revealing of a means by which one can avoid unhappiness and be released from the suffering that is felt in worldly existence. The above excerpt reemphasizes the theme of obligation that is sustained throughout the ten lengthy episodes where the *pāramitās* dispell a battalion each from Māra's army. Each time Siddhārtha recalls one of the Ten Perfections that he developed over his previous lifetimes, a *pāramitā* recalls the great deeds he has done in the past for the sake of others. Consequently, each "warrior" explains why he is obligated to do something for the Bodhisattva. In this way, the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* simultaneously impresses upon the reader or listener what the Buddha has done for them and that he or she is obligated to reciprocate in kind.[522]

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521 *SThūp* 52: *Esē vādahot bava raja asā, diva avut, 'Āyi, uttamayāṇeni! Perātuva ma topaṭa abhaya dunneṁ vē da? Mesē vāda hōnaṭa kāraṇā kiṁ dā' yi vicārā, 'Maṭa dun abhaya tela dāri āti muva denaṭa dinimi. Āgē maraṇa mama āra gatimi,' yi vadāḷa sēka. 'Esē vī naṁ muvadenaṭat numba vahansēṭat abhaya dinimi. Nāṅgi siṭiya mānāvā' yi kīya. "Apa dennā matu rākuṇu kala tesu muvō kumak keret da? Un māruyē mā māruvā vānnā' yi vadāḷa bas asā, 'Unṭat abhaya dinimi' yi raja kīya. Me paridden sivupā jātiṇṭa da, pakṣiṇṭa da, matsya jātiṇṭa dā yi siyalu satuṇṭa abhaya devā, lovaṭa vāḍa koṭa damgeḍiyen nāṅgī siṭa raju pañcaśīlayehi pihiṭuvā, siyalu satun dukin mudā jīvita parityāga koṭa, maitrī pātira vū numba vahansē anikak nisā no kaḷa sēka. Maitrī naṁ ḷat māgē aḍuvak nopānā piṇisa koṭa vadāḷa sēka. Esē vū numba vahansēṭa ada maṁ daskam no kereṁ dā' yi.*

522 Kulasuriya has also drawn attention to this section of the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa*, but for him, it functions primarily as a richly detailed literary technique that allows the author to illustrate the Perfections of the Bodhisattva to the audience. See his *Sinhala Sāhityaya I*, pp. 206-208.

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As the narrative on the Ten Perfections illustrate, gratitude and the obligation to do *pūjā* derives from knowing what was done in the past. History, in this way, contributes to ethics by making people "knowing subjects" who, by virtue of their knowledge of the past, are established in a relation with oneself and with others.[523] Making offerings to the Buddha's relics out of the knowledge of and appreciation for what he has done, forces the devotee to understand him or herself as a patient of the Buddha, that is to say, as someone for whom he has cared. Honoring the Buddha and what he did entails recognizing how one has benefitted from what he has done. This notion of ethics, taken from Foucault, helps us to see how *pūjā* can be a moral act that is done, at least in part, out of one's recognition of one's obligations to another. The awareness of what one must do for another contributes to the formation of one's moral subjectivity. In short, one becomes subjected to moral obligations that are created out of encounters with Buddhist history.

Since the Buddha accomplished the welfare of the world, the readers and listeners of the *Thūpavaṃsa*s, as members of that same world, are obligated to show their gratitude. To be a beneficiary or a recipient automatically entails a person into a relationship of dependence and obligation to someone else. This is particularly the case when the gift received—that is, the Dhamma and the Dispensation more generally—is invaluable and one is made to feel, so to speak, forever in the Buddha's debt. An ethics of devotion arises when one is made to see that the Buddha, in his omniscience, cared for me long ago, and yet now he is no longer around to accept a token of my appreciation in return. I

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523 Foucault, *Ethics*, p. 200.

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would argue that the impulse to do *pūjā* as depicted in the *Thūpavaṃsa*s reflects an ethical stance wherein one recognizes that, for all one's obligations from the past, one can never adequately reciprocate for what one has received. The virtuous person, then, repeatedly makes offerings to the Buddha's relics in an attempt to show one's gratitude for what the Buddha has done. Doing *pūjā* would appear to be futile, however, since the Buddha is no longer in the world and since one can hardly repay the means to transcend the world with a worldly gift. Still, venerating the Buddha is depicted as highly efficacious since it confirms one's dependency on him and entitles one to merit and the enjoyment of felicities in the future. This condition of moral subjectivity, wherein one's well-being has been provided for and one is consequently obliged to another, is expressed by *pūjā*. The act of giving flowers or venerating a relic shrine is ethical because it displays to oneself one's gratitude and dependence with regard to what the Buddha did in the past. *Pūjā* thus represents a means by which one embodies feelings of gratitude and obligation while engaging in acts that are morally imperative and beneficial.

Accordingly, I see a parallel between the compulsion towards *pūjā* produced in the narratives of the *Thūpavaṃsa*s and Foucault's notion of a "technology of the self." A "technology" for Foucault refers to the procedures that human beings use to understand themselves or, put differently, the way one's self becomes the subject of one's own attention and analysis.[524] The later writings of Foucault, particularly his series of volumes on *The History of Sexuality*, display a shift in focus away from technologies of power and

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524 Foucault, *Ethics*. p. 224.

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domination toward technologies of the self.[525] Such technologies of the self, "permit individuals to effect by their own means, *or with the help of others*, a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality."[526] Foucault's study of how the self is made a subject to be analyzed and cared for was specifically directed at practices he found associated with ancient Greco-Roman philosophy and early Christian asceticism. It is also useful, however, for our examination of the ethics of medieval Buddhist history. Acts of *pūjā* that display to oneself one's obligations and dependence also work to ethically transform the devotee and to gain desired Buddhist felicities as well. By linking ethics with subjectivity, Foucault's theoretical approach towards examining forms of self-discipline and self expression enables us to expand the inquiry into religious ethics so as to include practices that do not immediately appear to resonate with the moral prescriptions of religious traditions or a moral agency located in an individual's free will. As such, we can describe the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s as texts that render *pūjā* into a moral act. While *pūjā* is prompted by the ethical obligations that arise out of enncounters with history, it also

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525 It must be acknowledged, however, that as late as 1982, Foucault still understood his study of how the human being turns him or herself into a subject in terms of power: "It is a form of power," he writes, "which makes individuals subjects. There are two meanings of the word 'subject': subject to someone else by control and dependence; and tied to his own identity by a conscience or knowledge. Both meanings suggest a form of power which subjugates and makes subject to." For this discussion relating subjectivity and power, see Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power" *Critical Inquiry* 8, no. 4 (Summer 1982), pp. 778-781.

526 Foucault, *Ethics*, p. 225 (emphasis mine).

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serves to construct a particular type of self whereby one ultimately cares for oneself through recognizing one's dependence on another—that is, the Buddha.

The Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsas* have still more ethical implications for the world external to the folios or pages of their texts. These texts suggest that Buddhist history also works to create a vision of an ethical community that may be realized if and when their narratives generate the requisite emotions and awareness in a community of readers and listeners. We will recall that the audience envisioned in both texts is a plural one consisting of an unspecified number of *satpuruṣas*. This community of *satpuruṣas* is left deliberatively vague, as this allows the text to speak directly to and transform unlimited groups of people at different times and at different places. Yet if the number of *satpuruṣas* is left unclear, the qualities attributed to them can be clearly inferred. The virtuous person, to reiterate, is one who feels serenely joyful and confident of having his or her needs anticipated and met by the Buddha and other powerful agents in history. The gratitude that is felt as a consequence also entails the *satpuruṣa* in an ethical obligation to acknowledge one's benefits and dependence, normally through the act of doing *pūjā* to honor the Buddha and his Dispensation. The moral subjectivity that is developed through emotions and practices that arise out of encounters with history implicates the vituous person in relationships with others and, in turn, suggests that it is nearly impossible to be both moral and alone.[527]

The Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsas* suggest to us that since the *satpuruṣa* is an individual who recognizes his or her obligations to others,

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527 I wish to acknowledge Charles Hallisey for suggesting this interpretation.

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moral agency is realized first and foremost in relationships. The ideal Buddhist agent in these texts is not an independent actor striving to attain Nirvana. Rather, and in contrast to the traditional scholarly view of "Hīnayāna" Buddhism, the ideal Buddhist agent is one who is aware of his or her dependence upon and responsibility to others.[528] The Buddhist *vaṃsakathā* display and promote these very relationships to their audiences. The figure of King Duṭṭhagāmaṇī, for example, appears prominently in the *Thūpavaṃsa*s as a kind of idealized Buddhist agent. Wimal Balagalle has written that the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* constitutes a kind of "hero epic" (Sinh: *vīracaritakathāvak*), wherein Duṭṭhagāmaṇī represents a hero of battle (*yuddhavīra*) for defeating the Demaḷa army, a hero of generosity (*dānavira*) who gives away his own food to monks in times of scarcity, a hero of righteousness (*dharmavīra*) who builds monasteries and *dāgāba*s, and a hero of compassion (*dayāvīra*) who forgives his brother for making war with him.[529] The treatment of Duṭṭhagāmaṇī as a complex, multidimensional figure who personifies several different virtues in the same narrative should forestall efforts to interpret his character in purely nationalistic terms.

Indeed, the figure of Duṭṭhagāmaṇī may be understood more generally as a *satpuruṣa* who comes to recognize that he is situated in a relationship with

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528 The view that Hīnayāna Buddhism, and Theravāda by association, is a lesser and more selfish path to Enlightenment is readily found in some notable Mahāyāna Buddhist texts, such as the highly polemical *Lotus Sūtra*. Such Sanskrit texts typically disparage the path of the *arahant* since it is allegedly only concerned with one's individual enlightenment that is said to be qualitatively inferior to the state of Buddhahood. See, for example, the translation of the *Lotus Sūtra* entitled *The Scripture of the Lotus Blossom of the Fine Dharma*, trans. Leon Hurvitz (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), pp. 32-36, 81-82, 122-123, 210-214.

529 Wimalabuddhi, ed., *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsaya*, pp. xi-xiii.

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the past that entails feelings of gratitude and obligations to the Buddha and to other virtuous beings who have come before him. As mentioned above in this chapter, King Duṭṭhagāmaṇī feels pleased and obliged upon learning of Mahinda Thera's prediction that he would build the Mahāthūpa and Lohapāsāda. We should turn our attention again to this episode to see how the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* depicts the king's subjectivity and resultant moral agency:

> Thereupon King Duṭugāmuṇu thought thus. How? That is to say, 'The Mahathera Mihiṅdu, while speaking to my grandfather King Devanapātissa, said 'Great King! A king named Duṭugāmuṇu, who will be your grandson, will build a *dāgaba* of one hundred-twenty cubits called Ruvanmäli. He will build a mansion called the Lōvāmahāpāya that has nine stories for the Sangha to perform the *poya*,' and having thus thought, while investigating, seeing an inscription which had been inscribed on a gold plaque in a casket in the royal palace, had it read aloud. Hearing the message which was written, 'On a day to come in the future when one hundred and forty years have passed, a king named Duṭṭhagāmaṇi Abhaya, who is the son of a king named Kāvantissa, will build these two monasteries,' that King Duṭugāmuṇu who was happy, folding his left hand and clapping with his right hand, saying, 'I have been seen by the Mahathera Mihiṅdu, who is my Svāmidaruvō,' and having become happy, on the morning of the following day, having gone to the Mahāmevunā Park accompanied by his great retinue, assembling the Sangha, venerating the Sangha, standing on one side [out of respect], putting his two hands on his head [in reverence], announced thus, 'Reverends! I will build a *poya* hall resembling a divine mansion for the monastic community.'[530]

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530 *SThūp* 144: *Ikbiti duṭugāmuṇu rajjuruvō mesē sitūha. Kesē da? Yat, Mihiṅdu mahaterun vahansē māgē muttaṇuvan vahansē devanapātissa rajjuruvaṇṭa vadāraṇa sēk, 'Maharaja! Topagē muṇuburuvū duṭugāmuṇu naṁ rajek eksiyavisi riyan ruvanmāli naṁ dāgabak karavannēya. Saṅghayā vahansēṭa pohō karaṇṭa navamahal āti lōvāmahāpāya yi yana prāsādayak karavannēya' yi yanu sitā parīkṣepā karannō rajagehi karaṅḍuveka ranpata liyavā tubū akuru dāka kiyavūha. 'Matu ena davasa eksiya sataḷis avuruddak giya kala kāvantissa naṁ rajjuru kenekungē put vū duṭṭhagāmaṇi abhaya naṁ rajek mē vihāra deka karavannēya' yi liyā tubū asun asā , satuṭu vū ē duṭugāmuṇu raja vamata hakuḷuvā gena dakuṇatin at poḷā, 'Māgē svāmidaruvū mihiṅdu maha terun vahansē visin mama daknā lada vemi' yi satuṭu va devana davas udāsana mahasenaṅga pirivarā mahā mevunā uyanaṭa gos mahā saṅghayā vahansē rāskaravā saṅghayā vahansē vāṅda ekatpasva siṭa dohot mudunē tabā gena mesē dānvīya. 'Svāmīni! Mama bhikṣu saṅghayā vahansēṭa pohō geyak divya vimānayak hā sadṛśa koṭa karavami.* Cf. *Thūp* 217.

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That resolution by Duṭṭhagāmaṇī displays how a sense of happiness and responsibility toward others is produced in encounters with history. The king is made to feel grateful for having been "seen" by the *arahant* one hundred and forty years prior. In this way, the narrative works to make the king view himself through the angle of vision of another. He is made into a subject whose existence and obligations were predetermined. His joy at realizing how he was foreseen leads directly to a resolve to do what he must as determined by the past. History, then, teaches the king that his religious aspirations must be met in concert with fulfilling his obligations to others.

Yet history simultaneously teaches those in the audience to become aware of and reflect upon how their needs were anticipated and met by those who have come before them. Duṭṭhagāmaṇī's ascension to the world of the gods at the end of the narrative clearly illustrates how gratitude and caring for others leads to the attainment of Buddhist felicities. While acknowledging the possibility of a consequentialist interpretation of ethics in the *Thūpavaṃsa*s, the repeated emphasis on one's obligations and relationships to others requires us to acknowledge that a social ethics based on the value of caring is also present in these texts. Such an ethic is consistent with Carol Gilligan's articulation of a conception of morality that values caring and centers moral development around one's understanding of responsibility and through connections with others in relationships.[531] Gilligan, of course, identifies this ethical position more specifically with the various groups of women and girls that she interviewed for her research. Still, the *Thūpavaṃsa*s also privilege an ethic that is based upon

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[531] Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1982), pp. 17-19.

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the care that the Buddha is said to have had for all beings and the accompanying responsibilities that people assume in return. Put simply, ethics is viewed and expressed collectively through the ways one relates to oneself and others. In the same way, Premasiri has noted that the Sīgalovāda Sutta and the Parābhava Sutta depict a social ethic that consists of a universal obligation toward the mutal perfomance of one's duties to others instead of making claims to individual rights.[532] Our study of the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s reinforces the idea that a person is only ethical in relation to someone else.

Moreover, as we have noted, the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* tends to cast ethics and the way one relates to oneself as a beneficiary of history in the emotionally potent terms of kinship relations. We read, for example, that the Buddha anticipated the needs of the incalculable number of his children, which from the perspective of the reader or listener, includes me as well. The love of the Buddha for all beings is like a mother's, but higher and more refined since he is partial to all beings and not only to his relatives. At another point in the text, the narrator of the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* inserts a statement illustrating how ethics may be usefully understood in terms of kinship. When Duṭṭhagāmaṇī and his younger brother Tissa contend to inherit their father's throne, Tissa is explicitly faulted for ignoring his repsonsibilities to others. The Pāli version simply remarks, "The prince also set out prepared for battle."[533] In contrast, the Sinhala text states, "And Prince Tissa, without hesitating to think, 'Is he not my brother?,' 'Is there not a family relation?,' 'Is he not the chief king?,' being

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532 Premasiri, "Ethics," p. 163.

533 *Thūp* 208: *Kumāro pi yuddhasajjo hutvā nikkhami.*

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accompanied by his army, having climbed upon the back of the elephant Kaḍol, set out prepared for battle."[534] In this instance, the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* refocuses the question of ethics in terms of how one is subject to obligations through the relation to another. The fact that Prince Tissa took up arms against the rightful heir to the throne is made worse from the perspective of the narrative since he also ignored his fraternal responsibilities.

Again, the "reading" of the Pāli *Thūpavaṃsa* as seen through the writing of the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* sheds light on how the former text was valued and understood. The elaboration of ethical concerns in terms of kinship relations and obligations to others as evident in the Sinhala text speaks to, among other things, a desire to map moral agency upon a familiar system in which care and responsibility are of the utmost importance. The ethical understanding of oneself as a dependent "child" in relation to the Buddha not only conditions feelings of intimacy and dependence in the devotee, but it may also shape the ways that people treat their parents. In other words, the use of familial metaphors and imagery to evoke emotions and a moral subjectivity that is conducive to feelings of gratitude and obligation with reference to history is also liable to effect one's relations to the family and community around oneself. Both *Thūpavaṃsa*s depict moral agency as something that is other-directed and contributes to the creation of a community whose members care for each other. In the descriptions of the large groups of unnamed persons who spontaneously make offerings to the Buddha's relics and who collect precious gifts to donate

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534 *SThūp* 127: *Tissakumārayō da, 'Māgē bāyan vahansē vē dā' yi, 'Nākuḷukamek vē dā' yi, 'Nāyaka rajjuruvō vē dā' yi sākayak no koṭa tumū da sēnāva pirivarā gena kaḍolātu piṭaṭa pāna nāñgi saṭanaṭa sārasī nikmuṇāha.*

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towards the building of the Mahāthūpa, the *Thūpavaṃsa*s represent a vision of a moral community without explicitly invoking it. These texts, then, offer a glimpse of what a community of *satpuruṣa*s would look like. As such, we see how Buddhist history in medieval Sri Lanka articulated a social ethic within its attempt to transform individual readers and listeners into persons who understand themselves in relation to others and, thus, feel compelled to engage in moral acts.

In sum, the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s illustrate how historical narratives were envisioned to create virtuous persons who act upon habits of thought and emotional dispositions that make doing *pūjā* a moral necessity. They also show us that Buddhist history-writing is an ethical practice directed at changing the ways that readers and listeners understand and relate to themselves. Having been ethically transformed by the narratives of Buddhist history, virtuous persons will theoretically relate to others in accordance with the ideals of dependence and reciprocity that underlie the moral subjectivity generated by the *Thūpavaṃsa*s. As such, the ethical work of these texts carry implications for envisioning a community of *satpuruṣa*s who recognize and act upon their obligations to those who have acted on their behalf.

Yet it is the relationship with the Buddha and the past cultivated by the *Thūpavaṃsa*s that forms the basis for the transformation of readers and listeners into *satpuruṣa*s. This relationship is, in turn, expressed chiefly through acts of remembering and venerating the Buddha. The impulse to do *pūjā*, portrayed in the texts as the outcome of feeling serene joy and gratitude toward the Triple Gem, is envisioned to carry over from the characters in the

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narratives to an audience who encounters their stories. In this way, the *Thūpavaṃsa*s claim for themselves the power to give rise to the performance of real acts in the world that are consonant with the ethical vision of a community of virtuous persons. The moral agents constructed by the *Thūpavaṃsa*s are, in the end, active ones whose recognition of being "patients" directly affected by past events necessitates a response. Thus, if we take the the *Thūpavaṃsa*s at their word, their narratives work to transform readers and listeners into *satpuruṣa*s who act upon the knowledge and feelings obtained from an encounter with history each time they are read.

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CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

When I began researching this study several years ago, I imagined somewhat naïvely that I could survey all of the extant Sri Lankan Buddhist histories and find out how they collectively constructed an authoritative Theravāda tradition. My interest in discourse and definitions, however, soon appeared to be misplaced as it became evident that the *vaṃsakathā* display a range of different interests and motives. My readings and re-readings of the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s have gradually convinced me that Buddhist history-writing could consistently represent itself as a practice directed at accomplishing specifically religious ends. Moreover, I came to realize that the *Thūpavaṃsa*s could be profitably read and discussed without attempting first to arrive at a more accurate picture of their historical context. I have steadfastly avoided using the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s as sources to reconstruct a specific events in Buddhist history since, on the one hand, other such histories are available and, on the other hand, I suspect that the narratives of these texts were produced, edited, read, and recited often with other interests in mind.

My argument for reading the *Thūpavaṃsa*s as works designed to effect an ethical transformation in their readers and listeners is based upon explicit and implicit suggestions that their narratives literally make people good. As such, I take opening invocations and closing benedictions to be important evidence of how texts were written and what they were envisioned to achieve. A close reading of the *Thūpavaṃsa*s allows us to develop new questions and theories about the *vaṃsakathā*, without having to resort once again to the relationship

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perceived to exist between history and authority in Theravāda Buddhism. Thus, in responding to the question of how do I know I am right, I would reply that my interpretation of the practices and interests associated with Buddhist history-writing arises out of the structures and language that I find in the texts themselves. The persistent attempts of the *Thūpavaṃsa*s to persuade and delight while elaborating upon and even altering the "facts" as found in older, authoritative histories point to a method of textual production that is primarily concerned with directing the audience's response to the narrative therein.[535]

As such, I find many of the modern examinations of Sri Lankan Buddhist histories unsatisfactory since they typically limit themselves to reading the *vaṃsa*s instrumentally for recovering an ancient past or explaining the present-day situation in Sri Lanka. These readings generally reflect a failure to recognize the distance that lies between the environment in which the *Thūpavaṃsa*s arose and the contemporary perspectives through which we are liable to interpret them today.[536] The fact that they allegedly deal with real events encourages modern scholars to read them either as historical documents or ideological propaganda. The modernist conviction in history as a transparent

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535 Waldman makes a similar argument in support of the position that Islamicate historical narratives are "display texts" that need be viewed in terms of the relationship between the production of the text and the principles by which readers read them. She further notes two fundamental features of display texts that are also evident in the works she analyzes—1) detachability, or the fact that such texts are not related to the immediate and specific needs of the audience, and 2) susceptibility to elaboration, which refers to attempts at making the narrative more memorable and evocative. See her *Toward a Theory of Historical Narrative*, pp. 19-20.

536 In his study on medieval Chinese poetry, Owen warns us that if we overlook the historical distance between our time and the time of a text we risk reading that text according to an act of our will rather than by the rules given by the text itself. In short, when reading a text from another time, we are enjoined to recognize differences in the processes of reading and understanding that may be exhibited in the text. See Owen, *Traditional Chinese Poetry and Poetics*, pp. 8-9.

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window to the past and the postmodernist suspicion of history for its attempts to make a representation pass for reality have profoundly affected the ways that we read premodern Buddhist histories. Yet this "either/or" approach to the *vaṃsakathā*, while useful for making arguments about historical development and political uses of history, fails to acknowledge that works such as the *Thūpavaṃsa*s often display multiple concerns and motives, some of which appear far removed from the manners in which texts are written and read today. I have argued that the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s are preoccupied with constructing moral agents out of reading and listening encounters with their narratives. This reading of Buddhist history-writing as an ethical practice does not, of course, preclude readings that take the *vaṃsa*s as sources for understanding aspects of the past or as texts that could either support or challenge various authoritative discourses that fashion claims to truth and power.[537] My contention is, however, that a careful reading of the *Thūpavaṃsa*s offers more evidence for reading them as texts that are envisioned to transform the way people think, feel, and act in the world, making them virtuous persons who contribute to the welfare of others while earning merit that would benefit themselves.

Thus, I find it useful to read the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s as literary works that display an interest in embellishing and altering a narrative for

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[537] With regard to the latter, one could argue, for example, that the images of kings in the *Thūpavaṃsa*s serve to reinforce the authority of the king to become involved with the affairs of the Sangha. Yet, one could also maintain that such narratives actually represent a way of criticizing current kings for failing to live up to the standards set earlier. On the unsteady relationship between authority and discourse, see Bruce Lincoln's discussion in *Authority: Construction and Corrosion* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994) concerning how certain conjunctions or disruptions of events that make up authoritative speech-acts can have the resultant effect of either strengthening or weakening claims made to secure confidence and consent.

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the sake of producing various imaginative and aesthetic effects. The variations they present on older, established historical narratives in Sri Lanka leads me to believe that these texts were concerned with constructing good readers and listeners who are expected to respond in predictable and fruitful manners. We should note that the idea of a text composed for the audience's benefit has some interesting parallels in ancient Hindu literature as well. In detailing the legendary exploits of the god Kṛṣṇa, the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* provides an explicit description of the fruits of reading or hearing its narrative recited aloud: "Thus, if one were to continually recite that [narrative], having a mind not devoted to anything else [even] for three hours or for a moment, or if one were to listen repeatedly with reverence [to it], that person indeed purifies one's very Self."[538] Such a statement points to conceptions of what texts are and do in premodern South Asia that are markedly different from our own views today. The notion that reading and listening to a religious narrative could convey particular rewards or benefits appears to have been a widespread phenomenon in ancient and medieval South Asian communities.[539] Significantly, the *Thūpavaṃsa*s also display an understanding that their narratives would transform readers and listeners, producing real effects in the world. By envisioning a text as an agent rather than a passive object, the authors and

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538 *BP* 12.12.5: *Yaṁ evaṁ śrāvayennityaṁ yāmakṣaṇamananyadhīḥ*
śraddhāvān yo 'nuśṛṇuyāt punātyātmānam eva saḥ.

539 For further remarks concerning the fruits of hearing the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* recited aloud, see Barbara A. Holdrege, "Mystical Cognition and Canonical Authority: The Devotional Mysticism of the Bhāgavta Purāṇa," in Steven T. Katz, ed., *Mysticism and Sacred Scripture* (New York: Oxford University Press, forthcoming). Philip Lutgendorf has noted analagous references in the *Rāmcaritmānas* to the benefits that an encounter with this text offers to devotees. See his *The Life of a Text: Performing the* Rāmcaritmānas *of Tulsidas* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991), p. 38.

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editors of the *Thūpavaṃsa*s articulate the conviction that their works could elicit habits of thought and emotional dispositions that would, in turn, give rise to devotional practice in readers and listeners.

This investigation into the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s has focused on the textual characteristics of Buddhist history, maintaining that it is necessary to examine how these texts were produced, maintained, and circulated in order to interpret their functions and significance. As such, I hope also to contribute to recent discussions on the relationship between cosmopolitan and vernacular/local literary forms in South Asian history. In the field of Sri Lankan Buddhism, Charles Hallisey has noted that Sinhala translations of older Pāli texts often deflect attention away from themselves and to the authority ascribed to the original work, while Anne Blackburn has drawn attention to the complicated relationship that Pāli literature appears to have had with literature written in Sinhala, being at once displaced yet also preserved by Sinhala commentaries on Pāli *suttas*.[540] My study of the Pāli and Sinhala versions of the *Thūpavaṃsa* has shown in addition that the narrative elaboration and embellishment in the Sinhala text can be read as a commentary upon the older Pāli text, drawing out and giving emphasis to ideas and images that appear in the latter. Indeed, when seen through the lens of the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa*, Vācissara Thera's text appears to be more devotional than nationalistic in tone, and thus Parākrama Paṇḍita's work indicates one way in which the Pāli *Thūpavaṃsa* was read and understood in medieval Sri Lanka. It is important, I think, to ask what happens to our vision of Theravāda when we examine texts

[540] Hallisey, "Roads Taken and Not Taken in the Study of Theravāda Buddhism," pp. 42-43; Blackburn, "The Play of the Teaching in the Life of the Sāsana," pp. 193-194.

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written in local languages? In the present study, we have learned that a Sinhala text can help to expose manifest concerns with emotions and ethics in Buddhist literary practices that are only partly visible in the corresponding Pāli text. It is highly likely that greater attention to post-classical texts in local dialects will open new avenues of research and investigation into the history of Theravāda Buddhism.

The present work is intended to contribute more narrowly to an understanding and appreciation of what two Sri Lankan Buddhist texts were envisioned to accomplish. The Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s show us how emotions and moral agency could be constructed as the effects of literature itself. The virtuous persons to whom these texts are directed represent an audience of affected listeners, people who hear what was done in the past and, as a result, become ethically transformed. The *Thūpavaṃsa*s thus hold out the possibility for life to imitate literature through being directly prefigured and invigorated by it. Like the characters in the narratives, whose emotions and moral acts are conditioned by recalling the past, the readers and listeners of Buddhist history are made to feel grateful and to give offerings to the Buddha in the form of his relics. As such, emotions appear to have been valued in medieval Sri Lanka as a means to enjoying the good life both now and in the future. The *Thūpavaṃsa*s presume that emotions, rather than being simply instinctive or natural products, could be stimulated by encounters with historical narratives. Feelings of joy, gratitude, and dependence that are prefigured in the narratives of the *Thūpavaṃsa*s give a sense of oneself as a beneficiary of the past, which in turn entails obligations to try and reciprocate for the fact that

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one's welfare has been accomplished by others. By taking emotion as a determinative factor in moral agency, this study suggests the need to consider more generally how emotion and literature contributes to religious ethics and practice.

The narratives of the *Thūpavaṃsa*s, and medieval Buddhist histories in general, may therefore be said to inspire emotions that are constitutive of a particular moral subjectivity. To learn that events in the past not only occured, but that they occured for one's own sake implicates the text's audience in a relationship with virtuous beings in the past who took pains to provide later generations with the means to alleviate and ultimately eradicate suffering. History, then, deals directly with ethics since it fashions a moral subjectivity through which one understands oneself as a "patient" of the Buddha, a being who is obliged to express one's gratitude for having been anticipated and cared for.[541] The following quotation from the Pāli *Thūpavaṃsa* speaks to this continual obligation for beings in the present to honor traces from the past:

> One *thūpa* in Rājagaha, one in the city of Vesāli,
> one in Kapilavatthu, and one in Allakappaka,
>
> One *thūpa* in Rāmagāma and one in Veṭhadīpaka,
> one among the Mallas of Pāvā, and one in Kusināra.
>
> The *thūpa*s of the bodily relics which were established in Jambudīpa
> along with the *thūpa*s of the embers and the vessel are those ten *thūpa*s.

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541 It may be helpful to contrast the vision of history in the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s with our own Post-enlightenment views. We have been taught to see history as, in some way, liberating. To paraphrase Santayana, history affords us with the knowledge that can free us from repeating the mistakes if the past. History, then, is something for us to build on and something from which we can progress. In contrast, as I have suggested, history for ancient and medieval Sri Lankan Buddhists seems to have been written to make people feel dependent and inextricably involved with the past. Thus, far from being liberated by Buddhist history, one is actually implicated and entailed in relationships that dictate practices of veneration.

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The ten *thūpas* of the Best of Persons,
which were worshipped by persons and kings accordingly,
should always be venerated
by all persons together with the gods.[542]

Those ten *thūpas* are none other than the original relic shrines built after the Buddha's relics were first distributed following his cremation. The *Thūpavaṃsas* proceed to narrate how King Ajātasattu first gathered the relics from nine of the ten *thūpas* together in one place, and then how King Asoka found this relic deposit and had the relics widely dispersed throughout his realm.[543] Yet what is interesting about the above verses is that they articulate an obligation for a medieval audience to venerate ancient *thūpas* that, for all intents and purposes, no longer existed. It summarizes the account in *Dīgha Nikāya* concerning the location of the ten *thūpas*, adding an injunction for people in the present to continue to remember and venerate them, as it were, long after they had been destroyed and the relics removed.[544] The invocation always to venerate those shrines signals a recognition of the perpetual obligations that the past lays upon those in the present.

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[542] *Thūp* 179-180: *Eko thūpo rājagahe eko vesāliyā pure/ eko kapilavatthusmiṃ eko ca allakappake;/ Eko thūpo rāmagāme eko ca veṭhadīpake/ eko pāveyyake malle eko ca kusinārake./ Ye te sārīrikā thūpā jambudīpe patiṭṭhitā/ aṅgārakumbhathūpehi dasa thūpā bhavanti te./ Dasāpi thūpā purisuttamassa ye/ yathānurūpaṃ nararājapūjitā/sabbena lokena sadevakena te/ namassaneyyā 'va bhavanti sabbadā 'ti.*

[543] The *Thūpavaṃsas* remark that the relics in *Rāmagāma* were left out of Ajātasattu's deposit since they are said to have been protected by the *nāgas* and destined to be later enshrined in the Mahāthūpa in Sri Lanka. See, for example, *Thūp* 44, 181; *SThūp* 83.

[544] The last lines in the Mahaparinibbāṇa Sutta include a similar call for beings to worship the Buddha's relics [*cakkhumato sarīraṃ*], without specifying the ten *thūpas* in particular: "Worshipped by the lords of gods, the lords of *nāgas*, and the lords of humans, and likewise worshipped by persons and nobles also, may you venerate him with folded hands since, indeed, a Buddha is difficult to come across throughout hundreds of eons." See *D* II. 167-168: *Devinda-nāginda-narinda-pūjito manussa-seṭṭhehi tath' eva pūjito, taṃ vandatha pañjalikā bhavitvā Buddho have kappasatehi dullabho ti.* Note that Maurice Walshe relates a theory originally put forward by Buddhaghosa that the concluding verses of this *sutta* represent a later interpolation by Sinhala monks. See his *The Long Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the* Dīgha Nikāya, p. 576, n. 464.

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At the beginning of this work, we noted Daniel's helpful distinction for interpreting the *vaṃsakathā* in terms of reflecting either ways of seeing the world or ways of being within it. In confirming Daniel's assertion that Buddhist histories manifest existential concerns, the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s jointly suggest that historical narratives in premodern Sri Lanka were directed at prefiguring the experience and actions of people living in the present. The knowledge of the world supplied by history affects contemporary readers and listeners by contributing to their emotional and ethical responses from learning about the past. The *Thūpavaṃsa*s promote particular visions of the Buddha, the Bodhisattva, *arahant*s, and ancient kings in an effort to make their readers and listeners understand that they have been foreseen and that the means for their welfare has already been provided. The *Thūpavaṃsa*s can thus claim to make people virtuous since, in recalling the past, they make people feel and act in ways that contribute to the happiness of themselves and others in this world and in the next.

Encounters with the narratives of Buddhist histories are transformative in as much as they give rise to specific ways of thinking, feeling, and acting in the world. The *Thūpavaṃsa*s prefigure responses that make readers and listeners more ethical than they were before by relating that what was done in the past was actually done for their sakes. The overriding theme of beneficence in the *Thūpavaṃsa*s is therefore complemented by descriptions of and admonitions for beings to display their gratitude to the Buddha by doing *pūjā*. The emphasis therein on offerings and veneration as morally required Buddhist practices that are praiseworthy as well as beneficial underscores the need for

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more scholarly attention to Buddhist conceptions of devotionalism. The stress on the individualistic practice of meditation in the pursuit of Nirvana has heretofore underemphasized the worldly ends and social ethics that are commonly found in Theravāda Buddhism and often expressed in *pūjā*. In this study, I have argued for interpreting *pūjā* as a moral act that arises out of and reinforces the ethical awareness of being dependent upon others for one's well-being. In other words, moral agency is realized when one acts in response to one's obligations to others. This agency, moreover, is directly conditioned by the narratives of works such as the Pāli and Sinhala *Thūpavaṃsa*s, since they are responsible for teaching people how they have benefited from what others have done in the past. In this way, our study of Buddhist history may also inform new theories with which to analyze devotional practice in Theravāda Buddhism.

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